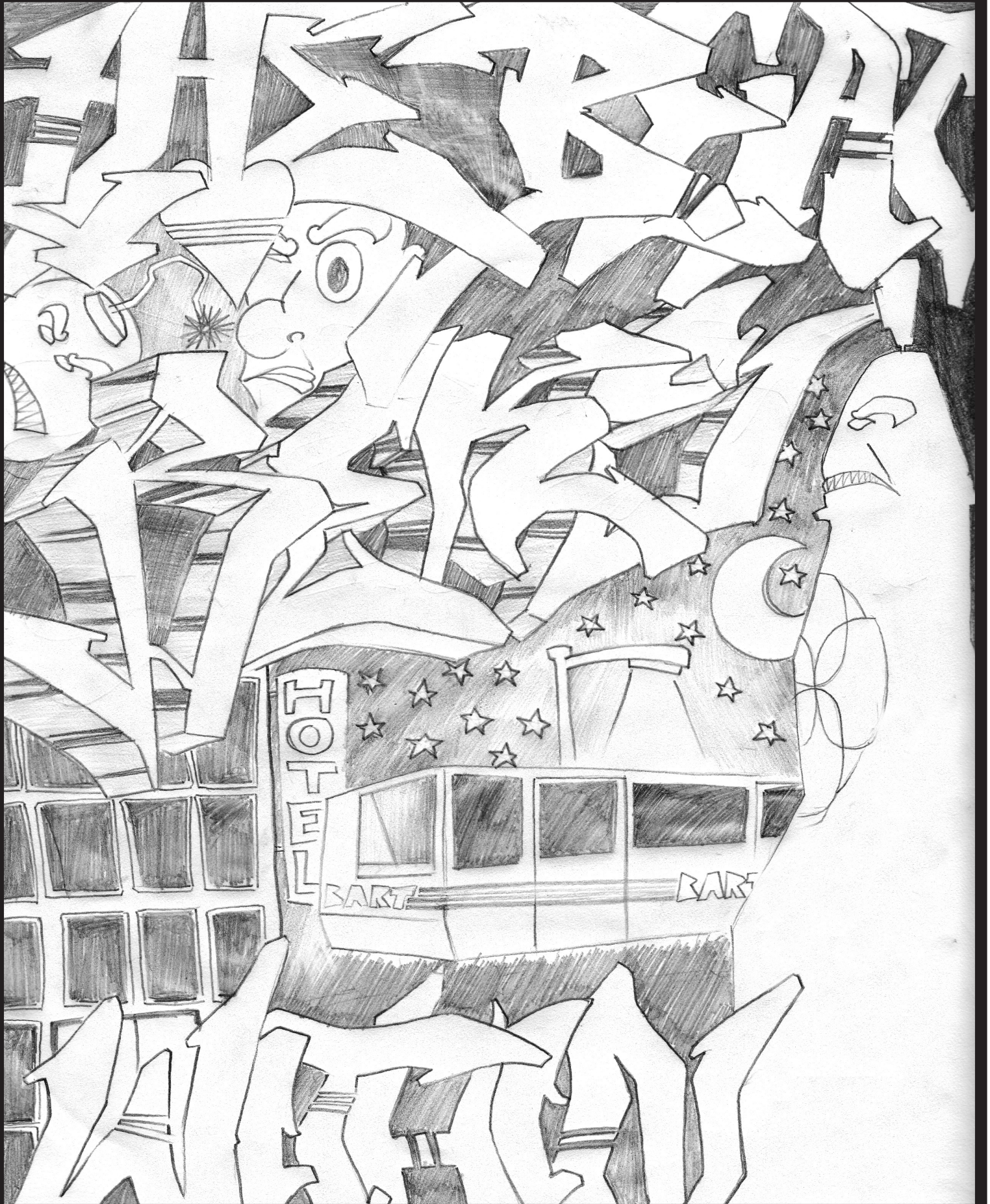


The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 14.04



We welcome all you Beat Readers and writers to another classic publication of The Beat Within, issue 14.04. Not that I'm saying that they are not all classic issues, but these are some exciting times as we get to witness history first hand. Everything from the jumpstart of the New Year, to our new President, Pres Obama stirring things up in the White House, and the huge challenge of restoring the econmy, and the drive to get rid of the old - the Bush era, and ring in the new!

As we all know, Obama has been president for a week, and he's already putting some big plans into action, like working a stimulus package, and oh how can I forget, the President signed a bill for Guantanamo Bay to close down. That is huge!

For those of you who don't know Guantanamo Bay, it is a military prison in Cuba on USA soil and houses all suspected terrorists. That's not a prison where you don't want to be housed at. If you're in there you have absolutely no rights. At least wherever you may find yourself right now you have basic rights to food, clothing , and if you think you're being treated like an animal no,w you just don't know what goes on in Guantanamo Bay.

Don't get me wrong, we're not saying that prisons are humane, 'cause they aren't right, at all. But at the very least you're allowed to file a grievance.

This prison is run by the CIA and since they're dealing with terrorists they use special tactics when they question the suspects. For instance they'll poison the suspects with drugs, hallucinogens, with the mission that they get you to tell the truth, or at least what the powers that be want to hear. Bottom-line, they torture you. Basically they make you think that you're about to die. They drown you in water until you basically crack. Talk about all the shhh you have to go through to be a snitch. Haha, I'm just playing. Yeah but this is huge. And some of these inmates houses in this prison might not even be terrorists. Basically, if the CIA says you are a terrorist then you're in there. All you have to be is a Bush hater, but hey who doesn't like the bastard? I don't.

Basically Obama took the huge step to close this horrendous prison, because he felt that human right laws were being violated and that U.S. military personnel were responsible for it. So he acted. Action! Now that's what I'm talking about.

That's one thing that I look for when people like to talk a lot and that's action. I'm not trying to down play any of Obama's fame and presidency by saying he talks too much. On the contrary I know that President's have to talk a lot and give great speeches. But I am a judge too. And I judge people by their actions and not their words. And Obama's actions, during his first few days in the oval office were clearly enough for me to judge what his intentions are. If he cares enough about some people that might not even be U.S. citizen's enough to close down an ugly prison, then he's probably just as merciful on the other end. And what I mean by that is his next step, some time in his presidency, God willing, he gets there, is to start tampering with our own "Department of Rehabilitation and maybe close down some other prisons right here, like the one you sit in tonight. 'Cause we know that we got some inhumane situations and inhumane facilities right here in our own backyard!

We got a lot of faulty situations going on in America right now. And if Obama is the good man I think he is, I'm sure he's going to take on all the issues at full force - from the greatest to the smallest issue in our

communities, nation as a whole.

I don't mean to sound biased but Bush didn't do anything but give us a stimulus package. He spent a few billion on the War on Terror, and they still haven't found Bin Laden. Leaving the US budget in a major debt. They cut off money for schools, unemployment is at an all time high (except in Brazil), and the economy is dipping folks. It's dog eat dog right now. But we must push forward and figure out a way for us to keep striving for the better. We can no longer depend on other key figures except our own selves. We must be held accountable for everything we do whether it be right or wrong, and improve our situation. At the same time we have to look out for each other. Do as much positive as we can, so we can get some of that good positive karma flowing. You never know who you have helped. That same person you helped, might help you out later in life, you never know.

Thanks Omar, we always appreciate your insights and thoughts on the world.

Moving on, we have some great topics that were addressed in our workshops, and many of our readers as you will see, or have seen, wrote about... the first topic, "Stimulating the economy" - The President-elect plans to pump hundreds of billions of dollars into the economy to create jobs and put a lot of people to work. He has said, "The monopoly on good ideas does not belong to a single party. If it's a good idea, we will consider it." Do you have a "good idea" for how to spend this money in your community? This is serious business, so give this some serious thought. How would you spend money to create jobs that puts more money in the pockets of more people? Lay out your plan, and if it's serious, we'll forward it to President Obama.

The second topic, "Everyone's talking change, are you?" - With President elect Obama a couple weeks away from being sworn into office as President of the USA, much of his platform during his campaign for office evolved around change. Most of us recognize a real need for change, yet we know one person cannot make this a better world alone. We all have to do our part. So this week we ask you writers to think about the change that starts with you. Tell us through writing how your part in "change" will make you a better person and, hopefully, have ripple effects that make your community and the world a better place. So, focusing on yourself, what needs to change?

The third topic, "Your own worst enemy" - For some reason, many of us find that we can be our own worst enemies. We might have an opportunity for something good, but we do something stupid, and lose the opportunity. It's like running from a group home when you have only days left to do. Have you ever sabotaged yourself when things were going right for you? What did you do that prevented something good in your life from happening, and why do you think you did it? Why do people sabotage themselves just when things might be changing for the better? Tell us of a time when you were your own worst enemy.

Before we say goodbye, do not forget our contest question, which was originated last week, given the numerous pieces we read about President Obama. The question is, "How does President Obama inspire you?" Please address these pieces to senior Beat editor Omar Turcios. The top three pieces, voted on by the lead Beat editors, will be given \$50 money orders. The deadline for accepting pieces is February 28, 2009. ALL the pieces will be featured in The Beat Within publication the first week of March, 2009.

Thanks readers, this issue goes out to all you first time writers, thanks for believing. See you next week!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, Monterey, Fresno, Solano, Oak Hill - Washington DCSan Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note 2

YODC, New Mexico 4

Oak Hill - Washinton, DC 6

Pieces Of The Week 9

Co-Pieces Of The Week 17

Standouts 24

<i>Alameda</i>	24
<i>San Francisco</i>	32
<i>Santa Clara</i>	38
<i>Santa Cruz</i>	47
<i>Solano</i>	49
<i>Fresno</i>	52
<i>Voices In Spanish</i>	59

The Beat Without 62



To The Beat Within

A Beat what's up, this is Xavier again. I'm letting people hear know about The Beat, so we can become active in it. I just want to thank Steve so much for all he does for us and hope to meet him one day. Thanks, Steve you're our inspiration and I appreciate you getting my work published! There are so many people hear who want to write, I say 10 out of 21 people and that's a good start. I hope all of Ivy cottage will be active in "The Beat Within"

-Xavier

From The Beat: Xavier, this is Steve here, and I want to let you know it's not I who should be thanked. The thanks and inspiration goes out to you and all the young people that write for The Beat. If it wasn't for you (all), I wouldn't even be helping out with The Beat. Keep writing and one day, I hope soon, The Beat will be up and running in full at YDDC.

Just Memories

Sitting in this box I start to reminisce, seeing my boys again is my only wish. My fallen homies gone, and I can't bring them back. They're all gone for life and that's a fact.

My homie, Andres fell to a gun, every one of them did, every single one, Menace, Showtime, AJ, Lil' Frank.

It feels like a dream, but I'm awake. It seems like yesterday we were posted getting blown but now I know y'all are forever gone. It's hard 'cause y'all in a casket. The life y'all lived never lasted, I still got love for y'all, it will never stop.

I got to maintain and stay on top. I never told y'all the things I needed to say 'cause I thought I would see y'all another day.

Andres I seen you die, my eyes can't cry, but inside it eats me alive. Showtime my OG, a cop took your life, that's why I got so much hate for the police.

AJ and Christian y'all took your own life, y'all were under 18, this isn't right.

Lil' Frank damn I never would of thought you would pass, it happens so fast I give you props cousin 'cause you were a Lil' G.

Now all I can say is RIP to all the homies who are in the sky, I'm sorry it's y'all who had to die, but life ain't a movie or a game. You play but somehow some way I'll see y'all again one day.

To every one who's lost someone I fell you, hang in there!

-Xavier

From The Beat: It's always hard when we lose a loved one or a friend. Don't let this loss sit with you, talk with someone to help you better understand death. You're not alone.

To The Beat

A what's up Beat? It's you homie Eric also known as Lil' Pit, coming at you from YDDC kicking it in Ivy cottage.

First let me tell you a little bit about myself... I'm 17 I'm from Espanola, New Mexico I've been locked up for 2 years because I made some mistakes in the past, but it's the past. I get out in a month and a half and gonna stay out.

I started writing because I see my roommate Xavier writing. He's the first person in YDDC to write, and he's gonna make history one day, so I just want to thank him for introducing The Beat to me. I'm gonna write a poem to my brother who past and I just want my nephew to know uncle loves you, daddy is smiling at you. I love you. We'll hope ya'll like it, stay up, peace.

-Eric

From The Beat: Welcome to The Beat Eric! Best of luck with your life! Keep writing wherever you go. We'd love to hear more from you!

From The Beat: This is the first installment from our new friends over at the YDDC (Youth Development Diagnostic Center), which is the youth prison for New Mexico. We want to thank the following writers for reaching out, and to our colleague Steve Serna who is taking steps in implementing a formal writing program in the YDDC, which is also in Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

Gun Violence

I've lost seven friends to gun violence since I've been locked up, and it's a waste of time and life.

Two weeks ago I lost my cousin, Frank; he was only nineteen and died. I'm sorry that's why I'm gonna stay gun free. RIP primo, I love and miss you, lil Frank.

-Xavier

From The Beat: We at The Beat are sorry to hear about your loss. It's good to hear that you're going to change your life and be gun free. Do what you can so you don't end up like your cousin.



Mom

Tears roll'in out of her eyes.

God only knows how I want to cry.

Across the table she holds my hands, seeing' her son almost a man.

She did her best to raise me good, and she had no choice but to live in the hood.

The things I do is not 'cause of her, it's my fault all the bad I learned.

Every night she would walk two blocks to spend 15 minutes with me, and I don't even give her 5 when I'm free. When I see her behind the glass, the short visits goes by so fast.

Times up back to my cell,

she holds in the tears I can always tell.

It's wrong for me to put her through all these hard times,

not ever thinking when I commit crimes.

Now I see what I use to do and it makes me sad, filling blue.

The lady who carried me for nine months,

packed my first lunch, game me love, always a hug never left me alone, and had me safe at home.

So why do I disrespect her so bad when she's all I ever had.

I pray for her every night, she's my life.

My special mother I just want to thank,

I love you mom, I'm sorry for all the pain....Your son.

-Xavier

From The Beat: When you get out, give your mom an extra five minutes every day, and when your out and about with friends think of the pain your mother went through while you were in lock up. Do you ever want her to go through that again?

We Need a Change!

People always want to know how YDDC is, so I'm gonna tell y'all from my point of view as a client, and it goes like this.

There's these buildings we live in we call cottages. There's, Ivy, Sandia, Loma, Manzano, Melagro, Espranza, Zia and Mesa cottage.

I'm gonna tell you a little bit about Ivy. 6am we wake up for chow as we walk to the chow hall I look at the Mountains, their so beautiful, it's cold at this time.

After this we come back to the cottage, and do our hygiene and clean. Then at about 7:30am we go to school, at school there's a lot of people who want to help us change, but will we or not.

I think school is the best place, but worst at the same time. All the Teachers help us, the Principle and Assistant Principle Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Hines they do so much for this place.

A lot of us don't appreciate it, we fight, we blindside, and we jump people, why, for what? A number or to show were down. It makes me mad that kids have to do this, mostly they do it out of fear, but the staff and school staff still try to make it safe for us.

After school we go to lunch, and then back to the cottage for the rest of the day. Shower, eat dinner, and go to sleep and do it all again the next day.

Late at night I think to myself (why?) why do we do all this nonsense, and I can't come up with the answer. I wish I could, I want to help change kids.

YDDC Does so much for us and tries to make our stay as good as possible for us. I mean we are locked up, yet we still have dances, sports, parties, and things we don't deserve but we still get them. I hope this place will change some kids. A lot of staff tells me they don't do it for the money, but for the fact that they might change a kid's life.

Statistics say 8 of 10 kids in the Juvenile Justice system will go to prison. Can we change that? I hope so, everywhere I look I see so many young Hispanic males and females here. Why can't we be like the rich kids who never ever think about jail? Why are we the ones who want to run every time we see cops? Why do we sell drugs?

I'll tell you why it's 'cause we chose to, no one makes us. I used to blame people for my bad life, but it's no ones fault I chose how I live. We still can make a change that's why I write to The Beat hoping it will come hear to help change someone. I'm the first kid to write and right now I have no back up on this but I know we can make the change. I hope that with me writing I can change some Juveniles life 'cause I don't ever want to see my brother in here. This is why I do this, I have so many things I want to do to help kids and I have to start somewhere. I am trying to help kids while I'm locked up, my mom told me "you can do anything you set your mind to" So that's what I have to do.

When I first got here the Deacon Mr. Balaya told me "you can be part of the problem or the solution." I've been part of the problem for a year and a half, and now I want to help. I know we can change, but it's just a matter of never giving in.

I hope The Beat comes here to YDDC 'cause we need a change, and I have faith we'll get it. We just have to be patient and wait!!! Thank you to everyone at YDDC who give us support, you all have made a change and it's me. Thank ya'll, God Bless

-Xavier

From The Beat: It sounds like a hard life to live in lock up, but it also sounds like your trying to make a difference while your in detention. With one person at a time change can happen, we all just need to be strong enough to want the change. Stick to your word and help make a difference.

My Nightmare

My name is Charles. I just want to tell you a lil' bit of how it is here in YDDC. It's not a place for any one to be. You are locked down most of the time, the staff act like there all this and that just cause they can punk kids. I just want to let everyone know not to come here; it's not a place for humans. It's like an animal caught in a cage.

Albuquerque is where I'm from, in these streets there's no place to run. Got caught up with my gun, now I'm in YDDC were you can't have any fun.

It's not a game if you're here, they put you to shame, or you have to put it down or be a punk. In here it's no game; if you're here you better stand your ground. In here it's no fun, shower with six men, locked down most of the time, but it's not fun. Any way's to be low down, so I hope none of you guy's come here to YDDC.

- Charles

From The Beat: We just want to let you know the two writings you sent in we combined together, hope you don't mind. How long have you been at YDDC? Is this the first time you've been locked up? Have you learned anything from this experience? Is this experience going to keep you out of detentions in the future?

I hope The Beat comes here to YDDC 'cause we need a change, and I have faith we'll get it.

I miss you Bro

Somebody please tell me why my brother Phillip had to die?

I miss you boy and that's no lie.

Thanks for being there for me always by my side.

Remember the times we use to kick it and laugh,

it makes me smile but I now it's the past.

Day after day you helped me out,

showed me love without a doubt

I remember that night I answered that call

at that point in time my life started to fall.

It couldn't be true, I wish it wasn't you.

It hurt me so bad when I think about the past,

you were only 18

lived too fast

mom and dad lost one of there 5 sons.

Now it's not the same 'cause were missing one.

I hate to see mom cry tears fall from her eyes.

As I sit in YDDC I think about you,

I wish it was me and not you.

I know you smile at me from heaven.

We'll all miss you 24/7 you left us a gift,

it was your little baby following your brother is what makes me,

so I'll say I love you bro.

I can't wait to see, 'till that day I got to stay strong,

keep shining brother it won't be long.

-Eric

From The Beat: We at the Beat are sorry to hear about the loss of your brother. Now that you have been in detention and have had to go through the loss of brother, is this something you would want your nephew to go through? If the answer is no then it's time to get your life together before it's to late.

The Children's March

I want to go to college. History is my favorite subject. I was inspired by the children's march in the South. I wish that young children of today can get together and march for something that powerful. I think that the children of today cannot get together because of all the gang wars and hood beefs that are going on.

Me myself, I will march for better jobs for teens. My life is like a movie, it gets badder and badder. I wish young children can get together once again to march for something so good and powerful like the children of the children's march.

-Will

From The Beat: Will, we appreciate your love for history and your ability to be inspired by it! We definitely need people like you bringing young people together around important issues. Stay positive about what's ahead. Life doesn't have to get worse and worse.

Give it All Up

The next time I go to court is when I go home. I gave it up. From here I go home. I got 1 month and 3 days before I go home. When I touch down I will never see jail again. I am a whole different person now.

When I was on level 1 I was a crazy boy. But now I am changed. I wish I could start my life over. I would change being locked up. The judicial system is all messed up. The only thing I fear is God.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Patrick, the important thing is that you feel like you've changed. No need to start life over, only to make better decisions from here on out. Keep growing!

New Home Of The President

Washington, D.C. is where I am from
Where working people can't sleep because of the sound of guns.

Where kids can't play in the parks 'cause their father ain't there to watch.

People like me can't make it in life because we don't follow our hearts.

If we can follow our hearts we can be something in life, that's the Best part.

-Kevin

From The Beat: This is a great rhyme, Kevin. It sounds like you know what your problem has been in the past. Now, nothing to it but to do it! Follow your heart and pursue your goals.

Forgive

I would like to forgive
All my peers that got kids
I know it's hard to get home so
I'm thinkin' why should I live?
30 day hits feel more like
30 years. Damn I'm sittin here
Wondering, sheddin' tears.
Make a ninja want to go home and
Drink a 12 pack of beer.
But that ain't my style,
I would rather shoot a deer.
So I would like to forgive
All my people that is here.

-Lil' Truck

From The Beat: Truck, we love this rhyme. You give us a sense of what you and your peers are going through, and we like the support you offer your peers. What are some other strategies you can use to deal with things, besides 12 packs of beers and shooting deer?

Give it All Up

Damn it's hard to give it all up.

I can't even stay out 6 months

To go to the mall up on the streets it ain't

Nothin but small bucks.

So I don't see why ninjas don't give it all up

My mamma keep askin me when I'm gonna change

I said I can't 'cause the streets keep callin' my name

But on the real tip I'm tired of livin' this life

Just to hang with certain people you got to earn a stripe

But it's all right, you could just do what I did

Guess what I gave it all up for my kids!!!

-Jeremy

From The Beat: Jeremy, this is a wonderful piece. Your words are powerful and they make the readers feel the struggle you're going through. Giving it up for your kids is definitely the smart decision. How will you fight temptation when it comes along? Remember your priorities and what's most important to you.

Giving It All Up

I've been through a lot of stuff coming up in the life of D.C.

I once thought nothing but just god could stop me.

I seen some of my men get killed and their faces put on t's.

That just made me get out on my shhh, go out and do me.

Sometimes I just want

To reverse my life.

Deposit the ones I love and do what's right.

It's never too late to make a really smart change

In life I use to run the streets by code and use nicknames

Me keep getting locked up, I been had enough

My family or the street, this choice can be tough.

I love my family too much

So I gave the

Streets up.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Daniel, this is a great one. We think admire your love for your family and you made the right decision. Family is important, and it's much better to be with your family than on the streets or locked up. How will you avoid the temptation of the streets in the future? Make a plan.

The Power That Guns Have

Guns have power.

Guns can take life and guns can also save life.

It's the way they are used and what they are used for that makes it become violence.

Gun violence is what's destroying the communities currently.

Mainly it's the youth committing crimes due to the gun.

Nowadays people run to the gun to solve their problems which is tough.

That's not making the situation better it just might make it worse.

It depends on the situation, the only way I use ammo is if it's life or death.

I don't fall victim to the gun because that's not what makes you a man or a better person. So stop the violence, stay away from the tool,

'cause if you fall victim you will be the fool.

-Fly Ty Frontliner

From The Beat: Fly Ty, you speak on it well. Guns are certainly powerful, but they aren't what make a person and they rarely, if ever, solve problems. In addition to sharing wisdom the way you have here, what can we do to address what guns are doing to the community?

My Life

Girls effin' for money
 Brothas wantin' hundreds
 I've been here 10 times
 It's easy to say
 That I'm a take a urine
 Show up at court
 My early childhood
 Playin' on dirty mattresses
 Steppin on bloody needles
 Been through it all
 The ups and the downs and the falls
 Win, lose or draw
 I still strive for the best.
 But when I get out, six months from now
 I need to be smarter
 Like having a pistol with a license
 'Cause it's not safe these days
 You step out on the corner
 Missing innocent people
 Everyday, dyin' for nothing
 Like little girls
 I work so hard for what I want
 Like, I work so hard to have my seed
 And I be damned, if I let someone
 Take that—my boy.
 My girl seven months pregnant
 I need to be there for my baby boy
 Like my dad wasn't there for me
 My momma was there for us five children
 It's effed up
 I had to step up at 13 years old
 I had to hustle to put food on the table
 It was hard being poor
 That's my life story right there.
 I'm 19 years old, it's gonna get better
 I've been living that lifestyle for seven years
 It's gotta get better
 Thank you Dave, from The Beat
 I'm Garret from the Heights
 This is dedicated to the whole world,
 Listening to me.
 Thank you.

-Garret

From The Beat: Garret, thanks for sharing. It's important to tell your story and make plans for what's ahead. We like your optimism and we agree, "it's gonna get better." What plans can you put into place to help it happen?

Give It All Up

Basically giving it all up to me means trying to do something new with yourself, trying to change negative to positive.

Sometimes I do be thinking about giving everything up, like the cars, money, girls and more stuff too, but once you start doing whatever you was doing, it becomes addictive, cause that's the only thing you're used to doing.

If I ever give it up though, I still think I ain't got nothing to lose, 'cause I'm school smart, and street smart, and that's something big to have, and I play football, and I'm nice in doing it. I think it will be good for me, and my family, to make a positive change.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: We think so too, Mike! It sounds like you've thought about this, and you know that habits can be hard to change. But you seem ready to do it, and you have confidence, which is important.

Me Being Cool

I got to pay dues to live
 In the good shoes
 Stay in a positive mood
 Stay away from them other dudes
 So I can't break rules
 And finish school
 So I can be cool
 Instead of lose
 Life can make you have
 The bad blues
 Make you want to lose your cool
 Do something real crude.
 Give it all you got
 Be a positive dude.

-Broderick

From The Beat: Broderick, we like we like that you're focused on staying positive and finishing school. What are your goals for the future to "live in the good shoes?" How will you do it without getting in trouble? Follow your own advice: don't lose your cool, fight the blues, and stay positive!

When I Get Out

When I go home to DC, I want to play basketball in the parks and go to Florida International University, study graphics and arts—I like to draw. When I get out I want to go to Golden Corral. I'm going to order salad, cookies and ice cream. I'm going to go with my sister, Diamond. She miss me, I miss her. It's been 5 months since I been home. I'm home-sick—Need to see my whole family. Need to get back to my own bed. Need peace and quiet. Want my family over my house to visit. Chill with my family, be safe with my family.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Kevin, this is a great plan. It's good to set goals for yourself. Now that you have these goals, keep developing your plans. Also, have a strategy for how you'll face the challenges when things don't go according to plan. One things for sure, you have too many big things ahead to spend more time incarcerated. Thanks for writing.

Sick and Tired

I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired
 I'm sick and tired of being down Oak Hill
 I'm sick and tired of poppin E pills
 I'm sick and tired of being labeled a criminal
 I'm sick and tired of going to a funeral
 I'm sick and tired of watching my back
 I'm sick and tired of having my mom cry
 I'm sick and tired of thinking I might die
 I'm sick and tired of hustling for the next dollar
 I'm so sick and tired it makes me wanna holler
 I'm sick and tired of drama down here
 I'm sick and tired of everybody in my ear
 I'm sick and tired of not having a dad
 I'm sick and tired of being so sad
 I'm sick and tired of worrying bout my sister
 And mother
 I'm sick and tired because I want a big brother
 I'm sick and tired of going for jobs and not getting hired
 I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired

-Decole

From The Beat: Decole, this is a powerful, honest piece. There is a lot to be sick and tired of. Some things are in your control, some are not. What can you do to change the things that you do have control over? What are the things that encourage you and keep you going? Hold those things close and stay positive. The fact you're noticing the things that you are says a lot about your heart and intelligence, and we think good things are ahead.

Learning from Past

I think I'm learning from the past now, being in here. Learning from the past is gathering up all the wrong things you did, and doing them smarter, or not at all. Like hustling on a corner, and the jump-outs hop out every day, and you get caught most of the time. You learn from that, by not being right there at the wrong time, or at all. I think I'm going to learn from the past though, cause whatever I do it probably don't be right, but at least I'm going to do it smart.

-Lil' Mike

From the Beat: We don't know, Mike, this philosophy worries us a little bit. The problem is that often, you don't know it's the wrong time until after the fact. You never know when things can fall apart. Is it worth the risk to get caught up again, trying to do things smart? Or is it worth your time to do things right?

Round Here

Oak Hill getting tough down here
When you trying go home I guess you out of luck down here
Staff spittin' in the soup down here
We say we grown men but it's nothin' but youth down here.
You will never get the truth down here
They stackin' incident reports to try to get some proof down here
I wish I had a gun to shoot down here
We do the same shhh, it's like we goin' in a loop down here.

-Lb

From The Beat: As usual, you've shared a great rhyme. Your frustration comes across powerfully, but we also really respect the way that you're able to recognize the cycles that repeat themselves. You may wish you had a gun in the moment, but you're also aware that that might be just "go in a loop." How can you break the cycle?

To Forgive

I think to forgive is to open up, and let everything go between you and that individual.

I think to forgive is to accept, I think to forgive is for everything to be kept,

I think to forgive is to come together, I think to forgive is to be in this world forever.

-Lil' Mike

From the Beat: Mike, we like this because forgiveness is a powerful act and your piece really conveys that. How do you let everything go? Sometimes it's easier said than done.

Learning From The Past

If I would have learned
From the past
I would have learned when my mother
First whipped my ass
Back when I used to steal her cash
Now I know it was
Her last. I wish I could
Have learned from my past
But I was moving too fast
See if my past was like
My future maybe I would be
Dead and gone like Luther

-Paul

From The Beat: Paul, we definitely get the sense from this poem that you're learning from your past, and this is a great rhyme. We also like that you don't expect your future to be like your past. What's the plan to make sure you avoid making the same mistakes?

What I Fear

I fear the heights of a rollercoaster high in the air, I fear death but I don't fear guns, I fear my dreams at night sometimes cause I think sometimes I'm in danger. I fear the streets. Cause I know I have to walk them with all this beef. Sometimes I fear myself cause I don't know what I might do or think about or get into. That's what I fear.

-Mechee

From The Beat: Mechee, these are some very real fears. But you can address some of these fears head on. For example, you don't have to walk the streets with beef. And if you fear yourself and the decisions you make, you can work on making better decisions. You've acknowledged the fears, now you can face them.



I'm My Brother's Keeper

I will do anything for my brother
No matter what it may be,
I promised myself I will always be there
Whenever there's heat
There's nothing that can get between me and my brothers,
That's how much love we got and share for each other.
We argued and fought from time to time
Some times I just wish I can press rewind
Whenever there's war we are prepared to fight
I'm my brother's keep and our love is tight.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Daniel, we get a good sense of your love for your brother. But besides being there for him when there's heat, or going to war for him, how can this love be shared? The goal is to show love not only in times of conflict, but also in times of peace!

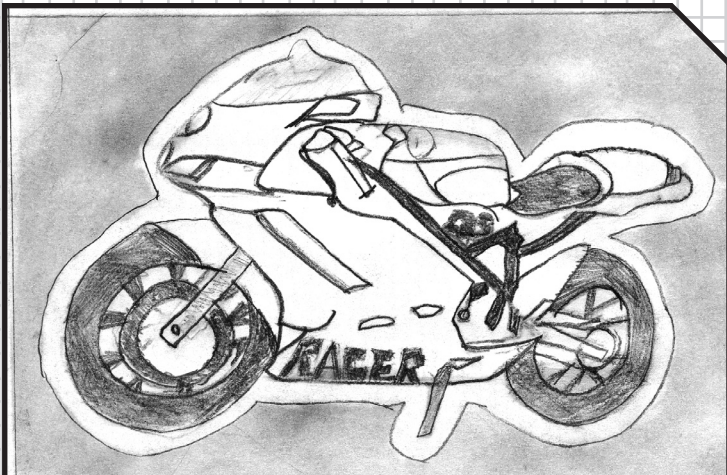
Your Own Worst Enemy

You are your own worst enemy. You make yourself happy, mad, and sad. You debate with yourself what you wanna do, and if it's bad, you have screwed up. So you talk about it with yourself, then you argue, then you go crazy because you messed up and didn't go with your instincts of doing something else.

I know this kid, 3.33 GPA, on track to graduate, and does these robberies and gets sent to YGC. Goes to court and finds out he's getting 707 and he sees no sign of getting out. See, at this point, he ruined his chances of getting to college now, because he go to school at YGC.

-Snaxx, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like how you describe the arguments you have with yourself when you make bad choices — and, especially, when you get caught for those bad choices. We also like the example, but we're not sure what you mean when you say he ruined his chances to go to college because he's in the YGC school. Do you mean you don't learn anything here, or that colleges won't allow him in if they know he studied here? We don't think his chances for college are ruined, though he did make things much harder for himself. Thanks for this.



My Life at Stake

I had an opportunity to walk away,
But instead I chose to stay.
I should have chose a path and walked that way,
That's why you see me here today.
I did the crime,
Now the time is the way I have to pay.
While I'm up here, all I can do is pray.
It 's gon' be hard in this world because of my race,
At school I mess up
so much that the teacher don't want to see my face.
God gave me legs so I'm going to walk my own pace,
I walk slow because my life is not a race.
I know here, in juvenile hall, isn't my place,
I have my own mind,
I made the mistake.
My life at stake,
I think in here, it's a waste.
I'm going to get out soon so I guess I'm going to wait
But right now a change is what I got to make,
I guess my other changes was fake.
At first I was asleep, now I'm awake.

-Tyrell, Alameda

From The Beat: This was an awesome piece. You said that your life was not a race then why play it like a game? Sitting and waiting in Juvie is like playing the waiting game; waiting to get sentenced, waiting for you visits, your meals, your LIFE. We know that you have the creativity in you and we hope that this change will be for real and not for "fake"! We have faith that you can change, but will you stick to your goals in the long run? We're pulling for you!

Change

Hey what's good, Beat? Me, nothing, just waitin' day by day for the judge to sentence me... but since Obama became president we should see a lot of change.

I think that Obama should put money towards more after school program, or programs that could help us juveniles stay out of here. What we don't realize is that the county of Santa Clara is pimping all of us... They making so much money by having us here...

Who ever was the genius that made juvies, jails, CYA's, is making bank... And we don't even realize it. What people fail to realize is that if we had something to do in the afternoons and evenings we wouldn't be in here... Adults is always telling us we need to get into something... But what is there to get into but trouble?

I'm not saying we can't just not get into trouble but most of us get bored and have nothing to do. I'm hoping Obama will make a change but we can't all count on it. They already tryna take all athletic programs from the eastside district... Now what you think that's going to lead to?! Nothing but trouble. It's going to cause more teens to get into trouble 'cause now they really ain't got nothing to do. That leads to, once again, the county of Santa Clara or wherever you from pimping us. So Obama, I'm hoping you spend that Gouda on something that we need and not on stupid shhh like Bush did. Well to all, stay up... and Fame, I love you, skim ha-ha...

-Faith, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We agree with you, Faith, the government needs to stop building jails and juvenile detention centers and try spending the money on important issues e.g. school funding and activity centers. Spending money to build more prisons and juvies is wasteful and it shows that they don't have faith in their peers to change. What do you think we can do to make these politicians see what we really need instead of them giving us what they think we need?

Simulating The Economy

I feel that money should be spent on schools and after school activities. I believe this because these things should be funded because children are the future. Children need school to gain knowledge and have a better future.

After school activities are also important because kids need something to keep them busy on their time off. Both things are very important because if the children go to school and then on their spare time get involved in bad things such as gangs and drugs, there wouldn't be no point of the school.

A child with knowledge and not involved with drugs or gangs has a good future. Then many children like this mean a better world. Like they say you have to kill a problem from the root and preventing it is even better. Children are the roots of the future.

-Tina, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are great ideas, Tina, really thought through. Yes, schools are useless if we aren't keeping our future presidents and CEO's out of trouble but what do you think about people who say it's the parent's job to keep their kids busy in the afternoons?

*Children need school
to gain knowledge and
have a better future.*

To My Mother

As we walk this life together
I will always hold your hand.
Always loving and protecting you
Is something that I want you to understand.
We have lifted up and matured together
In many different ways.
Our love is so incredible
And it holds so many strengths.

As we walk this walk together
I will do anything to make you smile.
I promise to make you laugh if you are sad.

As we walk this life together
I will show you how true love
Is supposed to be.

As we walk this life together,
You will see how you can count on me.

As we walk this life together
Remember that it began on April 15th, 1994.
And on that special day,
Cupid shot two arrows and didn't miss at all.

So always know that I love you,
You are my only queen
And I promise to always cherish you
And protect you
As we walk this life together.

In difficult moments...seek God

-Pretty Boy Bookman, Fresno

From The Beat: We think that this is one of the most touching dedications to mothers we have seen in a while. We are glad that you respect her, but showing goes a lot farther than just telling.

Becoming A Whole New, Better Person

Hey Beat, it's ya lady, T.T, aka Ladie-T. You asked what about me that needs change to possibly make me a better person. There are a lot of things about me that needs change.

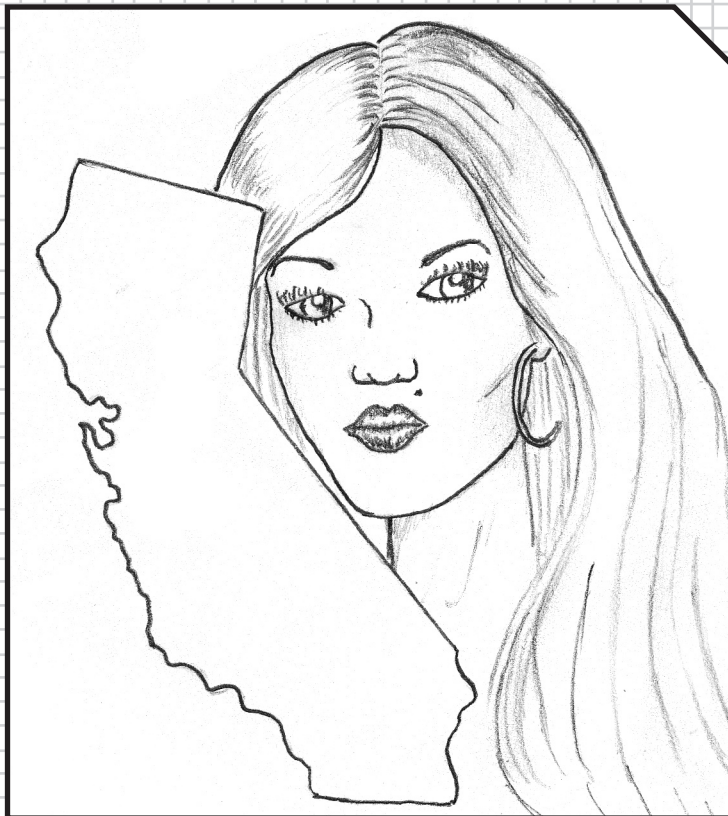
I know I need to change my eating habits for one, I eat nothing but junk food.(LOL) Naw, but on the serious side though, I need to change my actions. I need to change my whole way of thinking, because I know if I don't, I'ma continue to go downhill and end up just like everyone else in my family, a bunch of jailbirds with no permanent roof over their heads.

I know if I do change my faults, it'll make my life a whole lot easier. If I go to a whole new environment (which is what they're going to do to me), make new friends and just really get my shhh together, and start thinking about my future since I only got two years left to do. So, I'll come out on top of my game, and have all this shhh in my past, become a nurse and move on with my life.

So yeah, that's my plan for change, Beat, switch my whole way of living up. In two years I'ma be a whole new better person, grown and ready for the world. Gone.

-Ladie-T, San Francisco

From The Beat: Well, LT, it's clear that you know what to do. Only time will tell whether you're able to couple that knowledge with determination and action. If you follow your plan, then your future will so much better than your past. Becoming a nurse is a very noble ambition — to help others — and we hope you don't disappoint us... or yourself! Good luck!



This Place Is Lonely

Most people in the outside world my age I know that hasn't been locked up in juvenile hall before, think of this place as scary, like prison. But the thing is, it's not scary. There are no threats of being mistreated. The worst thing about this place is the loneliness. You are by yourself most of the time, surrounded by four walls and a window that you can't see out of. There is no real connection to the outside world. Yes, you can make a collect phone call once a night, but chances are your friends, parents, won't pay for it. And, yes, you can get visits twice a week, but the people that can come, you don't necessarily want to see. You stay up all night, thinking about the people you would die for and do anything to spend time with.

My nightly phone call is a joke. You can only make collect calls to landlines and I don't know who to call. My mom only has a cell phone; my grandparents just moved; my aunt and I aren't talking; and the person all sixteen year old girls want to talk to the most, my boyfriend, he only has a cell phone.

My visiting days are useless. I don't want my aunt to come, or my mom, and I wouldn't have much to talk about with my grandma. I don't think I could handle watching my grandma walk out of that door, set free, while I get escorted back to my dimly lit cell.

Some people think that they're lonely before they come in here, but what they don't realize is that you have the trees, birds, and your freedom. I would do anything to have them.

-Anonymous By Choice, Marin

From The Beat: It sounds to us like you have issues with loneliness not just in this isolated setting, but even on the outs, with your auntie and mom. So isn't your real challenge figuring out why that is? All relationships are difficult, including family relationships. They require both give and take, both following our own path and accommodating the path of others. What is standing in the way of your closest relationships? You clearly have an excellent mind. You can analyze and write clearly. So give us the benefit of that analysis in another clearly written piece.

My Own Worst Enemy

I've had plenty of great opportunities in my life to change. I believe I've sabotaged my whole teenage life. I mean, I was doing good in elementary and some of middle school. I don't want to brag, but I believe I'm a real intelligent person.

I try hard in school, but my other side of my loves to party and loves the street life. I know if my mind never ventured to that crazy life, then I would be out enjoying my life. I would have actually made time for my family.

To me, time is of the essence at the moment,. Because I'm in her and the world is movin' on without me.

A time when I was my own worst enemy was when I had plans with my mom to move on, and I had a kickback at my pad with like 12 people. I drank a little too much, and the instincts of getting money kicked in. So me and my homeboy dipped out and stole a car. We drove around 'til we saw an ATM machine. We parked like a block away and waited. A dude came and we robbed him for five bills. We drove back to my pad, and three days later we dipped out to a different state.

Just to make a long story short, the guy we robbed got messed up pretty bad, and they caught me in the other state. They sent me back to California on an airplane, and now I'm here, facing about six years in prison. If I never did that, then I would be free and enjoying life. And those six years that I could've done would never exist.

That is how I'm my own worst enemy. I made the choice to do bad, and now I'm paying for those poor decisions.

Well, stay up to all the homeboys, and RIP to all the fallen soldiers. From the homie in the max.

-Chango, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We don't think you're bragging to say that you're intelligent. Intelligence is not something you're responsible for. You're either born with it or not, and it's obvious that you were born with it. But as you have discovered, intelligence, by itself, is not enough. It must be coupled with a determination to succeed, and a sense of honor to do right by those you love and yourself. Just as you have been your own worst enemy at times, you can be your own best friend now, by recognizing that there is life after prison — even six years of prison — and that by using your intelligence to help others instead of hurting them also helps yourself and those you love. You have it in you to be somebody truly special. Now it's time to be that person.

My Own Worst Enemy

Before this New Year I was my worst enemy. I had a nice environment and had both parents in the home. Well, my dad and step-mom. I was sort of the down fall in my family. My mother got sentenced to prison for a few years and I couldn't handle it. I stopped playing sports, stopped participating in family activities etc.

I started running away from home just when something good happened such as my dad got a bonus on a pay check but I would get arrested and all the extra money would have to go to juvenile hall. So I was my worst enemy in my own eyes, but even though I pulled my family down with me. They still never gave up on me.

They come see me all the time and still provide what they can. I'm thankful for that. This year is gonna be different though I'm gonna help my family any way that I can and I'm not gonna get in the way too much. It will just be a smooth year. But it won't really start till I get out. I know, it sound real good...Now just watch me back it up...

-Rob/Poohda, Solano

From The Beat: We wish you all the luck with your resolution to do well! It sounds like you had a lot of feelings about your mom and dad, and weren't always in control of your actions. The more you can deal with your feelings the more free you will be to make good decisions. We're glad your family supports you! Believe in yourself!

Done With Lying

Peanutt's here once again, and I'm my own enemy. The reason why is because I had plans with my wife and family. Those plans and dreams were stolen from me just because I did a car jacking. Yeah, some might look at this and say, "Why would you put your charge out there like this?"

The reason is because I'm done with lying to myself plus to others. I guess I could say I'm a changed man, inside and out. The old me is dead and the new me is present.

So, about me having plans, my plans were to be a brother to my sisters, a son to my mother, plus my father. Also a husband to my lady,,, and be the father to my future kids. I guess I wanted that life I been running away from all these years. So I'm going to try to restart my life from scratch when I get out, and be the man to say, "I completed my dreams," not the one to say, "I had a dream."

I know that my family's by my side and my wife will wait for me. I love you, Precious. It's a always and forever thing.

-Peanutt, Santa Clara

From The Beat: For some reason, this unit offers some of the deepest thinkers in The Beat. We admire and honor everything you've written in this heartfelt piece. We would love to know what you think has led to this about-face in your thinking, so that instead of running from the life you had, you're now running to it. We hope your words inspire you to follow through, as they inspire us to want you to!

Stimulating The Economy

The president is talking about spending tons of money to go towards jobs and to help people to work. I really feel like if the president helped with more things like gang-free programs this place would be a much better place. This world I filled with lots of intelligent people that just made the wrong choices. Like me for instance, Jasmine.

I was born and raised in Fresno, California. I'm the middle child of three. I once attended Washington Union High School but I got expelled for bringing a knife onto school grounds. They would have let me stay if it was a small pocket-knife but it was a 21cm kitchen knife. Ever since then I started feeling like no one in the family loved me the same. I started to think what can I do to get attention and it seemed like getting into trouble was the only way I would be recognized. I'm starting to change my way because I have been in JJC for a couple of days and I've already learned my lesson and that is, I do not want to live a life behind bars.

President Barack Obama, please accept this letter I'm writing because I really believe that this will help me and a lot of other juveniles choose a better life. Just look, we need other options. There are many good things in life, not like going to Juvenile hall, jail, prison or even worse, be killed or hurt in a bad way. I'm my own worst enemy because I was suppose to graduate in January and a day before I got dropped for not attending my SARB meeting and skipping school. I really think it's stupid that it happened that way. If there was anything I could change, I would.

-Jasmine, Fresno

From The Beat: We appreciate you sending your concerns and suggestions to the President. We also agree with you that there needs to be more gang-free programs. We think there is a lot more than can be done to help teenagers but regardless of what is done in the way of programs, there is always things we can do to improve our situations. You mentioned repeated bad decisions you made. We feel it is beneficial to examine these situations and to think about the decision process we went through. How did we decide? Did we even decide or did we just react? These are ways we believe we can improve our situation ourselves.

My Soul is Still Hole

Hey Beat, this is Karmeisha
 Tomorrow is the big day
 What will my social worker say
 What will they do?
 Will they make me pay?
 Seems like I'm dreamin'
 Time go by quick
 Fast like a NASCAR
 Change the channel
 Pass that shhh
 I'm still breathing
 My pops grieving
 So he chose the bottle
 Killing himself softly with his drugs
 And let the demons
 Get to him
 and his mind
 And drive him crazy like a crack baby
 I know my homegirl
 Miss me
 She the only one who
 Writes to me
 And will ride or die for me
 I seen it with my own eyes before
 My uncle
 Say keep my head up
 Though he ain't the one locked up
 Pops ain't here
 When the money starts rollin'
 That's when he will wanna be near
 Grandpa said I won't be nothing
 I say
 I will prove you wrong
 Haha I will show you something
 Ma don't care
 Doin' her thing
 Getting' high off trees
 Ain't even in my life to be there
 That's OK
 I will shine
 And when I do
 I might just leave my haters behind
 All I got is me, God and the air to breathe
 When I look up at the sky
 Sometimes I cry
 Wonder why
 My ninja tell lies
 Though I love
 & Still will be by his side
 'Cause I'm a solid female
 and nobody can break me
 unless you kill me
 But my soul will still be whole
 Shinin' in the sky.

-Karmeisha, Alameda

From The Beat: Nobody can break you - but you can break yourself if you let anyone drag you down (and that includes your man... don't let yourself be brainwashed into thinking that you need to be "solid" with someone if he doesn't cherish you!) Just reread these words and appreciate the talent and heart of the person who wrote them - she deserves the best!

The Streets

In the morning I wake up and look at the new day.
 I go outside and look at the dogs barking, and make sure that no one is creeping up.
 I would take a cigarette out, spark it up, and walk down the street.
 As I walk down the street, someone is getting beat up, and then gets shot.
 I keep walking as I see the cops racing down the street.
 Yeah, it was murder, but it is something that I see every day.
 The life of a gangsta is hard but these are the streets of Fresno.

-Lalo, Fresno

From The Beat: The streets will never change as long as people turn the other cheek and pretend not to see the pain all around them, and help it to change.

Sorry Mom

Now I'm locked up so I switched my mentality
 I turned my life to God and don't care if people mad at me
 It's gonna be sad to see but I'm gonna test my trust
 I'm gonna start off slow and throw away the drugs
 No more drugs I'm tired of that crap
 Because of that hit I treated moms like an itch
 And lost a relationship that was hard to come by
 I don't believe I did it for that stupid high
 And yes you cried and had a baby in your tummy
 Now I understand you only did it because you loved me
 Now no one trusts me and I have a bad state of mind
 I just wish I had a chance to truly apologize
 But it is too late there are no second tries
 I really messed up telling too many lies
 You probably want me to die I'm sorry to say
 That your first-born son came out the wrong way

-Tayion, Fresno

From The Beat: Thank you for writing such a powerful and honest poem. You end up hurting those who love you most when you're locked up, or doing bad things. If your mom is a forgiving person, we think she will feel your honesty and remorse, through your words. Keep using those words to connect with her, to rebuild that relationship, and maybe as a first step you should send her a copy of this poem.

The Situation We're In

I think that the President should make a change right away and stop wasting everybody's money on building prisons and start building more jobs and schools for everybody.

I say that because when everybody starts to see that there's more prisons than school is really a negative thought knowing that the government is setting up our country on failure.

There should be more jobs because the reason some people do crime is because they need money and they have a hard time getting hired. If there's more jobs built and more schools made everybody would have a positive attitude knowing that they have a chance on being someone in life.

If a good change were to happen on making this country better like building schools and building more jobs I guarantee that there would be less crimes committed than there is today.

-Chow Main, Solano

From The Beat: We appreciate that you care about everybody in society, and want to see changes that will help everyone feel that they have a chance! We know that more education means less prison. It is said that the number of prison beds planned is based on the number of kids who can't read in 4th grade! Let's hope we see some progress with the new President!

Our Doom, It Looms

To rappers, jackers, finger snappers
Who (w)rap us, jack us, and brain snatch us
With gangbanging, slang slinging, bling-blinging
I ask:
Does trigga only rhyme with ninja?

Go black boy, it's ya birthday
So give birth to a new day
Richard Wright talked right, right?
Did that make him white? Hell, naw
So stop frontin' and get backin' up off
The booty-bouncin', car jackin' gun poppin'
Way you livin'

Let's blow up, boom
Let's grow up, soon
Our doom, it looms
In the city it go down
Ninjas hittin' the ground for nothin'
Gun rockin', awe-shockin' soldiers
On the wrong battle ground
Ain't nothin'

The 5.0s, the POs
Got us all on lockdown
Like we nothin'
The cell, a small hell
My head spinnin' round
I can't feel nothin'
Full grown, home alone
No queen wearin' my crown
Built nothin', girls hollerin'
Moms cryin', they mouth making no sound
Lived nothin'

Let's blow up, boom
Let's grow up, soon
Our doom, it looms

What if her smile was the trigga
To why you dig her?
What if a book was the trigga
That made you think bigger?
What if a drunk drive was the trigga
For you to quit liquor?
Again, I ask:
Does trigga only rhyme with ninja?
STOP!

-Fresh, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love your list of "What if" questions, because they remind us that any experience can trigger a change. This is a reminder to all that everything has consequences — including positive ones that come from positive deeds. What have been your "triggers" for change? What books have inspired you? What experiences have changed you? What will this experience trigger in you? This is a terrific poem.

Stone by Stone

I have a wall you cannot see
Because it is deep inside of me.
It blocks my heart on every side
And helps emotions there to hide.
You can't reach in
I can't reach out
And so you wonder what it's all about.

The wall I built in which you cannot see
Results; all made from insecurity.
Each time my tender heart was hurt
The wounds within grew worse and worse.
So stone by stone
I architected a wall,
That is now so rebellious
It will not fall.

Please understand that it's not you;
Continue trying to break through.
I want so much to show myself
And love from you will really help.

So stone by stone
Please chip at my wall
Until stone by stone;
It starts to fall.

I know the process will be slow
Because the past is never easy to let go;
Of harms and failures long ingrained
Upon one's heart from years of pain.
I'm oh so puzzled
Should I honestly let you in?
I've thought about regrets and consequences
I know I might get hurt again

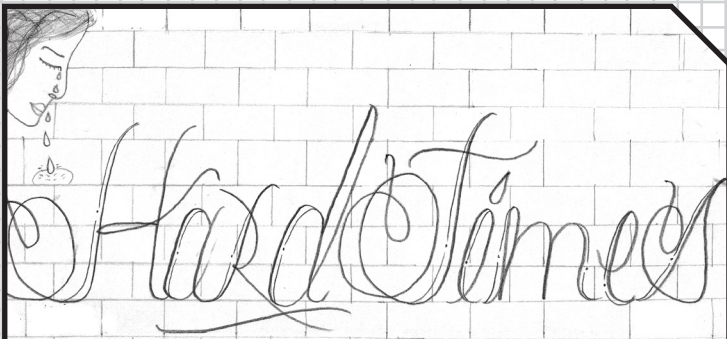
I've tried so hard to break the wall
But seem to get nowhere at all
For stone upon each stone I've stacked
I've left between them not a crack
The only way to make it fall
Would be the imperfections within the wall.

I did the best I could to build a perfect wall
But there it still remains a few flaws
Which is the key
To breaking through this wall to me.
Please use each flaw
To at least cause a crack
This will allow you to knock at least one stone
Off of each stack.

For just as stone by stone was laid
Along with every wound filed with pain
Stone by stone the wall shall break
As the power of love
Replaces every ache
Please be the one
Who cares enough
To find the flaws, no matter what.

-Lamarr, Alameda

From The Beat: It's fitting that your best poem would be the last one you write for us from incarceration. We hope that we will see you in our offices.



Change

Change means a lot to me. The reason it means so much for me is because I first came to JJC on March 25, 2008 for 3 counts for three counts of robbery and 7 counts of assault with a deadly weapon. I was a very angry, addicted, and selfish person.

Well I told my family I was gonna change, but I was addicted to the fast life, fast money, and power. My actions soon led to me getting a second strike and a CYA Commitment. This really opened my eyes about what I was going to do with my life and if I would live to see sixteen. I changed my mindset and my way of reasoning with things. I decided I don't want to fight over little stuff, and when I get mad I just think about the consequences before I act and the pain I will cause my family if I fight.

When I came in this time I didn't break the law of any rules. My PO dropped my YA Commitment because I didn't run.

-Casper, Alameda

From The Beat: We are impressed by your determination and self-discipline, and hope you can stick with it. It won't be easy, but you have shown that you have what it takes!

Realize

I'm thinking bout changing the life I live and staying out of harms way goin to church more often and guide my younger sibling the right way to go and not follow me down the path I'm going cause it's ugly in the street and now it took me 22 times to get locked up for me to realize that I'm messing up And I would like to change it

-Babino, Solano

From The Beat: We wonder what pushed you over the edge this time and made you see you want to change? Think about the way you make decisions, and how you can do that differently this time. After 22 times people may not believe you, so don't look to others for encouragement. Keep a goal or idea of yourself in the front of your mind that you can remember every day. You can change your life anytime you want. Good luck.

It Was All Going Good, Until...

When I'm done with my bottled water or soda can, I throw it in the recycling bin. I think if we recycle we can save money.

Just a month ago, I started trying good in school. I actually tried to do my homework before I even watch TV. I slept earlier just so I wouldn't be late. I stopped being lazy, carried my books instead of going to my locker. That wasted time and I was late. The consequences were my bad grades.

Finally, after I worked hard I got winter break. When I got back, I found out I was being locked up for something I did a month ago. I forgot to return something and that messed me up. I should be studying for the finals next week. Hopefully I can get out soon, deal with the suspension I got from school, and make it for the rest of the finals. I messed myself over. But if I get released soon without delay, I still got two-three days for finals, and during my suspension, I'm going to study.

-Bailey, San Francisco

From The Beat: Sometimes, even the smallest mistakes can throw us off course, and force us to take a detour to get back on course. It sounds like that is what happened to you, so we have faith that you will be able to continue on the excellent path you were on to finish school. We learn things from every experience (not just in school), so we know you've learned something from this experience that you can put to good use when you get back on track. Good luck.

Skip's Broadcast:

Stimulating the Economy With Change

Beat! You know me, Skip, broadcastin' in HD (high definition).

But yeah, we hear all the time — mainly just in the last eight years — about how change is going to happen in the United States, and Bush was right; it was change. We saw gas prices sky rocket to damn near five dollars, thousands of people were laid off from their jobs, and last but not least, the ongoing recession.

The recession got so bad, Young Jeezy named his album after it. But hopefully Barack Obama will live up to his change slogan when he get into office, because we for surely needed it in 2008 and we still need it. I done took the liberty of merging these two topics into one, so I'ma elaborate on both.

The economy is in the recovery stages of a financial crisis and Obama is talking about pumping money (billions of dollars) into the economy to create jobs. Now, I ain't jumpin' for joy just yet until it happens. I have some ideas on how to spend this money constructively: open more recreational centers for children and teens due to the street war that's going on. People shouldn't have to fear for their life going into another neighborhood, so make it available to them. Jobs for convicts. Just because of the past they had, it's more based on the future. Jobs for teens (more jobs than it is) with the job readiness option included.

A lot of those have had an effect on me because I felt with those options available I wouldn't be in the predicament that I'm in and hopefully those will change my future plans.

-Skip, San Francisco

From The Beat: These two topics are, in truth, already merged. One affects the other. You've clearly thought about this, Skip, and as you get exposed to more ideas (through college, especially), your very fertile mind will come up with even more excellent suggestions. We think all your ideas are good ones, especially providing jobs for teens. We think if government paid teens to clean sidewalks, pick up litter, mentor younger children, help older citizens (all things we desperately need), we would have far fewer crimes being committed by the young, and far more young people on their way to college and decent futures. Thanks for thinking and for sharing.

My Worst Enemy

My worst enemy is if I ever lost my mother.

Then I would have my twin sis, stepdad and my two little brothers.

I know if I got in some trouble my mom would be stressin'.

All this gang stuff — gun totin', weed smokin' — I got myself caught in.

Here I am back in jail for hangin' with the wrong crowd.

I want help, I really want to get it, but I don't know how.

I want to graduate and go to college.

Instead of tryna make money on the block and take wallets.

All the calls I've been makin' and letters my girl been sending me.

The most thing is losin' my life.

That's my worst enemy.

-Mike-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: Let your love for (and from) your mother guide you to the path you want to walk — the one that leads to graduation and college. We're not sure what kind of help you're looking for, but the best thing to do is to look really hard at the things you do that lead you here, and then try to address those problems in particular. If you have a drug or alcohol problem, seek the help of AA. If it's gangs, there are organizations and individuals that have been there and found a way out who can help you. If it's not having money, that's harder to address, but there are places (including The Beat Within office) where you can hook up with programs that might pay you something to participate.

Mr. President: Fix This Dysfunctional Country

I feel that change is good. But I also feel that change needs to happen in our country before we go try and help and change other countries. Our country, our ghettos, our urban areas and streets need help and change. But the government feels that what's happening over there in Iran or Southeast Asia.

There are people out here without jobs, without homes, food a family, and it seems the government just doesn't care about them.

It's people here who shoot and kill people and go to jail for life. But then again, the government allows people over in Iraq to go blow up homes, kill innocent kids, get a medal of honor for that. Plus, on top of that, getting paid. I feel that's wrong and that Obama really needs to bring change and fixed this dysfunctional country.

-Dow Jones, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree with you, DJ. We often say that the most important function government plays is as teacher, so that what they do becomes a model for citizens to follow. Like you say, it makes no sense for them to condemn the war in the streets at home when they have brought war to the streets abroad. To put it another way, in the context of the death penalty, there's a poster that reads: "Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing people is wrong?" Like you, we hope the new President can address the problems that make this country dysfunctional.

Life as a Game

Life is a shady situation. I was told that thoughts become emotions, emotions become actions, actions become habits, habits become character, character becomes destiny.... Our thoughts are by choice.

But are our thoughts really by choice? What if something is on our mind and won't leave? Then what?

I see life as a game. Some people beat the whole game, some people advance to new levels, and for some people it's game over. People like me use cheat codes: Like weed, alcohol, and codeine. Those are used for us to get through the game without thinking about the real obstacles in life.

When you became married, the game becomes multiplayer. Sometimes your partner can improve your game, and sometimes they can be your downfall.

-Lil' Ant, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow - you have some incredible insights, and the questions you ask are deep. We wish we had answers. Have you tried asking the mind/body people who come in on Monday nights - about whether or not we choose our thoughts? Maybe the idea isn't about trying to control them, but just notice when them as they come up?

Good Ideas

Hey my name is John. I have a good idea for the money. I would invest it into schools so they would have more P.E. equipment.

Also, I would invest it into a business so I could hire a lot of people that's on parole, 'cause they can't get jobs easily now and won't make guns legit for 25 and up 'cause 21 is too young.

I also would donate money to churches so they can look better and have more activities for the children. I would also have a Thanksgiving place where all poor people can go to eat all day.

-John, Alameda

From The Beat: We appreciate the thought and care you put into the communities' needs. It's a crime they take sports from schools! We hope there will be more job training for people who really need it, and we don't like guns...even 25 is too young. What kind of activities do you think would be good for children? Music classes? Thanks for your ideas!

Mentally Ready For Change

Well, what's up Beat? I'm back in this hole getting ready to go to Colorado. I'm hella mad. I was only out for two weeks and came back in this hellhole because I let a stupid/slow-ass female get to me. I know I should have swallowed my pride.

I was up in here before I got released for them two weeks for damn near 5-6 months. I was so ready to change. I ain't even going to lie. I was working on me. I went straight to the grouper and got on level. But I let a stupid female get to me and I reacted on it. I know I shouldn't have.

But basically answering "everyone's talking change am I?" Yes, I was talking change but obviously I wasn't really ready mentally. But now I'm ready 'cause I'm starting to look at stuff at a bigger picture and I'm not going to let girls push my button to the point I explode. So, basically yeah, I'm gonna do me and do what I got to do so I can get off this probation shhh. If my PO think sending me to Colorado is the best, then I'm gonna prove to them I can complete the program and be home with my baby and family. So yeah, I'm ready for the challenge.

I am going to change. I'm not just going to talk the talk, I'm gonna walk the walk. I'm gonna show my big bra (RIP Darious) didn't leave his little sis back to be a messed up, ya dig.

-Queen Bri, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's not good that you were not able to control yourself when your buttons were pushed, but it is good that you've looked at yourself and seen what you have to do to flip the script of your life. Good for you to be willing to go to Colorado and meet the challenge of change. Your attitude will determine your success (or failure), so we're expecting good things to come from this experience for you. Just keep an open mind, and absorb all you can to make you a stronger and better person so you never have to repeat this experience again.

Life

I ain't feeling the topics tonight. So I'ma write what's on my mind. First off, I went to court earlier last month, and the DA over at county is trying to give me and my co-parts life for an attempted murder charge. It's hard thinking that you might do life.

I know for a fact the time will drop, but the principle is that I might be labeled a lifer in the system. I don't want to be a lifer, and I know everyone else don't either. You may think you're a bad-ass in the system and in front of your homies' eyes. But you're not.

What about your family? Look into your mother's eyes. See the pain and tears she's tryin' to hide to stay strong for you. Why are your so-called homies that you would die for out there not caring if you are in here? They don't and won't shed a tear for you. When you get out and when you choose to kick it with them again, look into their eyes. See if they want to give their life for you. See how they help you in your future.

I'm not telling you to go kick it with them and do stupid things that wastes your time and hurts your family. I'm telling you to give life to your family who gave life to you. Your mother brought you here and sacrifices for you. I know I will protect my family no matter what. I'll do it with honor and pride. The question is will you see life, or "do it?"

-Saetern, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Here's another example of the deep thinking and beautiful writing we have come to expect from you, Saetern. How can the profound wisdom you show in this piece (and so many more) become part of the thinking of young people BEFORE they find themselves in your situation? Maybe your words will reach some - or even one - before he makes that terrible choice that leads to the dead-end of "doing life." If that happens, you can count that as positive karma to balance out some of what has gone before. Thank you for your honesty and willingness to share it.

My Own Worst Enemy

Your pride can be your own worst enemy. Even sometimes when you know you should do something different or make the better choice that will benefit you, your pride takes over and pushes you to do what you want to do and not what you should do.

Temptation and opportunity play a part too. At times when you're capable of doing something, even with the knowledge of the consequences, you act on it and do it because you feel it could be done. The temptation of actually doing it and while your doing it can cause a rush of blood to your head and prevent thorough thinking and you just end up acting upon it.

I was supposed to be getting off probation in Dec. of '08. My PO said I was doing good and he'd get me off by Christmas. I was working for the city and passing my piss test. I felt I was just playing the system and was getting through it like a knife to the gut. Three months before Christmas, two weeks after my 16th B-day, I get wrapped up like a mummy. Now I'm getting tried as an adult with four charges, (THREE OF THEM THAT CARRY LIFE SENTENCES).

I was my worst enemy.

-Jon Jon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If only you could have thought these things through before you got locked up. Do you see the intelligence in you that we do? How do you feel about your sentences? Do you feel that you should be charged as an adult? We hope that everything works out for you, because we know that you can change your life around. You are too smart not to. Thoughts?



Your Own Worst Enemy

Sometimes we can be our worst enemy. By drinking, selling, and also using, we're not just hurting ourselves, we're hurting our community, the place we call home.

We sell to our homies and wonder why they turn their back on us. It's because the drugs got to their heads. We wonder why we always get locked up. It's not because that fake person snitched, it's because we messed up and we shouldn't have done that stupid shhh.

Our own moms and family members are mad at us because of the shhh we did and it's sad that I'll probably never be able to see my kid. All because I became my worst enemy and did the crime I did.

-Bro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We know that many of The Beat readers will have many things to say about this piece, good and bad, because you've touched on topics that people like and don't like to talk about. Take for instance what you said about selling drugs to your friends, you had such a great explanation to everything that you said! You are a born teacher, Bro. We hope to see more pieces like this in the future (and not because you're locked up). Keep in touch when you become a world-renowned college professor! The world is yours!

Las Pandillas No Lleban A Nada

Yo tengo 16 años y en mi pequeña edad he pasado por muchas cosas. Hace unos años fui pandillero y sufrí mucho. ¿Imaginate como te sintiera que alguien te mande a matar a otra persona o hacer una cosa mala? Por esa razón me sali y me vine para este pais y viene solo a seguir haciendo las mismas cosas.

Gracias a Dios sigo adelante. Tengo un hijo precioso y a una novia muy Linda que me ha apoyado en todo aún sabiendo que me van a deportar. Por eso les digo que se cuiden y que apoyen a sus familias.

A los que anda en pandillas, pidanle a Dios que los ayude y los va ayudar. Cuidensen y portense bien. Las pandillas lo único que trae es la muerte, la cárcel y vivir una vida loca.

From The Beat: Que bueno que hayas decidido salirte de la pandilla antes de hacerle daño a otra persona. Al haber tomado esta decisión, has prevenido muchos derrames de sangre y de lágrimas y una gran peso de conciencia. Se nota de volada de que no eres de esos tipos de gente que no le importa matar a otra persona. Ahora tienes a un hijo y a una persona por quien luchar en la vida. Si vuelves a venirte aqui recordarte de lo tienes. Mantente lejos de tu pandilla porque te pueden hacer daño por no haber obedecido a lo que te mandaron a hacer.

Gangs Won't Take You Anywhere

I am 16 years old and in my short life I've gone through a lot of things. A year ago, I was a gangster and I suffered so much. Imagine how would you feel if someone sent you to kill another person or to do a bad thing? That was the reason I got out of it and came to this country, but I came here to continue to do the same thing.

Thank God I'm still on my feet. I have a precious son and a beautiful girl who are supporting me even knowing I'm getting deported. That's why I suggest you to take care and support your families.

To those who are in gangs, ask God to help you and He will help you. Take care and behave well. The only thing gangs bring is death, jail and a to live a crazy life.

-Catracho, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's a good thing that you decided to get out of the gang life instead of hurting another person. By making this decision, you avoided, a lot tears and blood shedding, suffering and a heavy load over your conscience. It's obvious that you are not like those people who don't care about others. Now you have a son and someone to fight for in life. If you come back here, keep in mind what you have waiting here. Keep yourself away from your ex-gang because they can hurt you for disobeying what they asked you to do. You know how gangs work.

No One Hears Me

I open my eyes, I try to see
but I'm blinded by the white light.
I can't remember how, I can't remember why
I'm lying here tonight and I can't stand the pain
And I can't make it go away.
How could this happen to me?
I've made my mistakes, got nowhere to run
The night goes on as I'm fading away,
I just want to scream.
How could this happen to me?
Everybody's screaming,
I try to make a sound but no one hears me.
I'm slipping off the edge, I'm hanging by a thread
I want to start this over again.
I just want to scream, how could this happen to me?

-Cody, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, Cody, this piece is very deep. Sometimes we need to just scream and cry and vent because if we don't the frustration and anger will just build up and build up until we explode. Never feel ashamed to scream or cry to let it out because it takes real strength to let loose. What do you think about your piece? How does it make you feel? We wish you the best upon your return home.

Worst Enemy

I understand when y'all say we are our own worst enemy, when we do unnecessary things that cause ourself harm. But then again, everyone does things that is unnecessary or things that don't have a meaning. By being in a battle with your own worst enemy, you can win and overcome.

-Lil' Danny, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though this piece is short, it carries a powerful message which we agree with. At times, all of us are our own worst enemies, and yet all of us have the power within ourselves to overcome and move beyond our weaknesses and limitations.

Help Me

I sit in my cell, the walls close in and I know that my time has just begun.

I'm not in my group home. I gave that up. I haven't been sentenced yet, just my luck. After a while I give up hope only to think of reuniting with dope.

But I don't. I keep my head up just like mom told us before she left.

I sit in here to better myself but I can't do it alone. I need help. I really need all the help I can get and that's why I write this.

-Devor, Fresno

From The Beat: Thank you for having the courage to reach out for help! That's not always an easy thing to do. But we hear your message loud and clear. There are so many people out there waiting to help you. Find an adult you trust and admire. Find a community organization that empowers youth. Someone is waiting to help you.

Change

I'm tryin' to change my life because me and my brother in jail and my mama not happy with it. This the first time me and my brother got locked up, and she also not happy because me and my brother was in jail for Christmas and New Year.

My mama, she sad. So I am tryin' my best to be good in here and be good when I get out so I won't be back in here and I won't make my mama sad. My sister told me that my mom not eating and I don't like that.

-Fia, San Francisco

From The Beat: Can you put yourself in your mom's shoes for a minute and think why she would feel so sad to see her children locked up at any time, but especially at Christmas? If you were the mother, what would you want from your children? Can you (and your brother) give her what she wants?

Enemy

What it do, Beat? This is Cy. Well, I'm still up in this shhh hole, I'm just doing me and should be out of here pretty soon. I'm going to Wyoming for a year.

Well, about "Your Own Worst Enemy" topic, I say everyone who's reading this is their own worst enemy. I say this simply because when you get locked up, who do you blame? Saying that I've been my own enemy since the age of twelve, this is why I'm always locked up.

I'm sure a couple of people could relate to this, say you're with the homies and everyone's hella drunk, and someone says "lets go come up on a car" you know it's a bad idea, but you still go do it. Why is that? You don't know right. That's why your own enemy. You get locked up because of you, or your enemy. Don't be a fool!!!!

-Cyclopse, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Too true! We can be our worst own enemies and sometimes we're too harsh on ourselves. We're allowed to make mistakes and do things wrong, otherwise how else would we learn? The difference is that we all take different things from these experiences and "mistakes" and that can either make you or break you. What have you learned from all of your life experiences?

Loved One

Friendships last a lifetime,
And love is never promised
Your memory will stay in my heart and never be forgotten.

I was told nothin' lasts forever,
But I hope we stay together,
Still waters run deep, as fire grows wild.
My love for you is as innocent as a child,
When I tell you I love you it's because I really do,
Or when I say that I miss you, I'm telling you the truth.
Though I haven't seen your face in a very long time,
My love for you grows like the numbers do in crime.
Baby girl, I love you and staying faithful
Because you're my soul mate I love you and miss you so,
These were the things I needed you to know.

-B Boy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: B Boy, you blew us away with this poem! The way you molded the words and they way it flowed together was beautiful. Have you ever thought of going to school for writing? Who knows, you could be a future English professor or one of the great poets of the future!



Everyone's talking change, are you?

Yes I have changed. I change, because I have responsibilities to look after my Little Bru. He looks up to me, so I didn't just change for myself, I changed for him.

But these streets won't ever change. People is still mobbin', robbin', and grindin' doing whatever they go to do to get their money. Ima try to get a job and right, but still when I walk these streets it's still not safe, but Ima always have ma head up mostly because I'm not scared of none of these ninja's out here.

I been there, done it, so it's time for a change, all ma potnas that do they thing is always gon' be there, we gon' kick it and whatever, but Ima have a job and work hard for my money, changing is the best for me.

-Marv, Alameda

From The Beat: We appreciate that you care enough for your little bru to understand he needs you. What kind of job will you look for? We hear your dedication to change...and wish you well.

To Obama

If I were President, I would use any of my privileges to their fullest potential. Like if there were any vacant fields or lots, I would build an eco friendly factory, and hire many people who were in need of work. I would also give the homeless homes. It would not be a sanctuary, or like giving a hand out, but it would be like a place that they could move up into the middle class from and teach them to help themselves. I feel that Obama is going to take us out of the recession and I know that Obama is going to do other great things as well.

Hopefully, my ideas here will interest those that read this issue. Thanks for listening.

-Ramon, Fresno

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing. We all hope for good things in the next decade, but remember that it takes everyone to change what everyone has caused, one man cannot do it all alone.

A Nightmare

Pass the weed ninja is what the kid said
Ridin' 'round in the coupe wit' my eyes all red
I switched lanes and looked down at the pistol on my lap
Then I looked at my potna will this ninja really clap
Hell yeah, that's my ninja he gon' ride
If I get killed today, my ninja gon' slide
So we pull up to the block and bounce out of the car
Pants saggin' and everything plus I'm higher than the stars
What we 'bout to do, I'm tryna get this dough
Me I ain't knowin' that this ninja off blow
So we go and hit a lick and we get 100 stacks
Somethin' else I ain't know, somebody about to be on they back
My potna sat in the car so I gave him twenty-five percent.
But he wanted to argue like it wasn't enough to pay rent
Forget it then ninja, take it or leave it
He said if you was me you wouldn't want to receive it
I throw him the dough I ain't messin' with you no mo'
I turn my back and get hit with a fo'-fo'
All shots pierced through my head
At ten o'clock at night the kid was gone and dead.

-Purple The Kid, Alameda

From The Beat: Good God. We are so grateful to know this was a dream, that this didn't really happen to you - because it would be such a waste of your precious and valuable life, your unfinished story. As you discover yourself and develop your talents as an writer, we hope you remember that the greatest piece of writing you will ever do is writing your own future, and becoming the author of your own destiny.

A Million Steps

When I was going to Fresno High I was getting a 4.0. Everything was good until I committed my first crime at school which got me expelled. I went to court and they put me an ankle.

When I went to an expulsion hearing, the school board decided to give me another chance to go to a public school because of my good grades.

On my recent court date instead of attending a different school and trying to change I was being placed in a substance abuse unit for six months.

I slowly seen my life going down the drain but I didn't want to believe it. I feel like I have taken three steps forward and a million steps back.

Now, I'm stuck in a hole and ready to go where ever life takes me.

-Brandon, Fresno

From The Beat: Stay positive, with your capabilities you will soon be taking a million steps forward.

We All Be Dreamin

We all be dreamin', steady stealin' for no reason.
I was raised on the block where the crack heads feedin',
in for a hit of coke. They will come and slice your throat.

And if it's a tug-a-war, they gonna break the whole rope.
Everybody's dangerous, so having guns is hope.

That's they lil' brother in that gun that don't grow.

Kill some more people then that gun get old.

But never throw it away so that the gun get sold.

Then you go to jail knowin' somebody done told.

Then when you go to jail, your girl put your call on hold.

She got you thinkin' like she never done this before.

And when she gets back on the phone it be time for you to go.

Askin' you personal stuff I'm thinking girl you should know.

Now I'm tellin' myself my grandmother had to go.

I try to cry some times but tears don't show.

If this life is a dream what does Doctor King say it for?

I had a dream like his- I should be rich tomorrow.

-Dirt Laden, Alameda

From The Beat: You talk about the brutality and cruelty of life on the streets, but we want to know where you fit in. Where do you see yourself in 10 years Dirt Laden? Still caught up in the street life? Or far far away from it all?

You Should Have Known.

Momma, you were never there for me. Never cared for me.

See these tears roll down my eyes cause you were never in my life.

Smoking and drinking. That ain't cool. You told me to forgive you.

Do you really think I'm a fool.

I'll never forgive you, never hear you.

Pain, hate, a big disgrace. Hate goes away. So does pain.

But disgrace stays in my brain.

Ooops I forgot, I got your name.

Insane! I forgot you even walked this earth.

I know you that's hardcore. It's not. It's like a sore.

It hurts more and more.

It'll heal for real.

How does that saying go, you'll reap what you sow.

Do you even know? Do you want me to show?

Don't forget we have the same last name. Mine equals fame.

We're not the same. You're crazy and lame.

If I were you I would be ashamed to even show your face.

I hate you to the fullest. I'm the one who's going to graduate from school. Sh...

Di you even think—with all those drugs? Your brain shrunked, man. I can't stand you.

But I got to hand it to you. You did your own thang.

It's like a song that sings. Wait, don't cry. This poem's the true way you lived your life.

Wake up. Don't fake up.

Man, who are you? I don't claim you. I'm so ashamed of your name but not the last name cause it's the same as mine. Here, get the sign, you're our of my life.

This is my last line. For messing up my time, goodbye you fake.

This is the last straw. You get what you saw.

-Willheasha, Fresno

From The Beat: We feel for you and know what it is like to have an insane parent who has hurt us. We identify with all your feelings and understand that you are entitled to all these feelings. You were screwed over. Your mother did you wrong but it also sounds like she was fighting her own battle with drugs. We never forget what these parents did but we work to forgive and we always give thanks for the opportunity these people gave us to live a life. Good luck. Peace and love.

100% Real Talk

This is the way I live — guns, weed, sellin' dope, robbing, hitting licks, everything. But you don't think about your family or your mama or nothing, you just in it to win. But if you put it all together, it's not worth losing your life or going to jail, because soon as you get shot or do a crime, people like, "God, please help me! Save my life!" Or, "Get me out of this", but don't even take time out and even ask God for forgiveness or even pray.

Look at me. I'm in the Ranch. I been in and out of jail, and I write in The Beat and talk about change, but I never do. I keep stressing Moms out, but it's '09. I be really thinking about my freedom, so I'm go' do what I have to do to succeed. I'm gone.

-Yung Dink, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right. People here often say that all they care about is their mama and family, but they don't think twice about leaving their mama in tears as she watches her "baby" imprisoned far from home. It sounds like you are beginning to see things like an adult, which means that you see your responsibility to others, and not just yourself. You say you never change, but we see change in this piece of writing. Once that process starts, it only continues, and has no end. Keep thinking about your mom and your freedom, and tell us what you "have to do to succeed."

I have learned from my mistakes like a wise person does. I also believe this will be my last time in jail ever.

Ready to Change

I feel that I'm ready to change my life around and make the right choices that will help me progress forward and make me successful.

I have learned from my mistakes like a wise person does. I also believe this will be my last time in jail ever. I believe I'm ready to become a man and accept responsibility and get and hold a job so I can make money and not get in trouble for it.

I want to get out of here and hurry up and knock out my 6 months at Camp Sweeney.

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: We're glad you're ready. School is a big part of Camp Sweeney, study hard while you're there. Get all the help that is available to you. Take care and good luck.

More Jobs

My opinion on President Obama is if he wants more jobs, he should open more companies so that people can stay focused and out of trouble. That would help a lot because out here in Fresno, there are a lot of people who need money, a lot of poor families. So that would be great and he would help a lot of families. He would also help me because when I was out there, it was hard for me to get a job. But when I get out, I hope it is easier for me to get a job.

-Edwin, Fresno

From The Beat: What a great idea! More jobs in the community is always a good thing, especially where there are many families living in poverty. You can get a job too! There are job services out there specifically for young people who have been previously incarcerated. We encourage you to talk local community organizations so that can find out where to go for job services.

Just Thought Of It

Man, I just thought of my ninjas that wasn't here when I was locked up. All of these young men dying for something they don't even own.

I never listen to my mom or dad. Dad was always locked up. Moms always stressing. Sisters out there doing their thangs. Brothers are never home. Uncles end up dead. Homies end up dead.

I need to be in school where others are at. I could only see my mom for 45 minutes a day. It's my fault because she told me to go to school and keep my chin up. This is just for ninja's been through the same I been through. Remember, "blood is thicker than water." I'm gone!

-B-Hunt, San Francisco

From The Beat: If family is what's truly valuable in your life ("blood is thicker than water"), then how will you show your respect for the treasure that is your mother? She has lived longer than you; she understands things in a way that you can't until after you have lived longer, experienced more. You've seen the consequences of doing what you want, rather than what you should, so how will your life change when you touch down?

Your Own Enemy

Whats up Beat? If you ask me sometimes I do think I am my worst enemy and that I do sabotage myself at times. Why I don't know, maybe it's just how I am.

Others talk about change and I don't think I'm ready for that. Every time I get out I wanna change but I keep goin' back doing wrong and coming back. This time I'm 18 and I got 34 days left and when I get out it might go for the good or it might go for the bad wait and see.

-Ali, Solano

From The Beat: It really helps to learn about ourselves, understand why we make the choices we do—and see where we fall away from what we really want in the end. We're sure you're not interested in checking out the inside of the adult system. Get to know yourself instead! Commit yourself to your future!

Living Locked

R-Mac, also known as Ray,
 8 out of 12 hours a day,
 I'm in a makeshift cage,
 Pending suicidal mind that guides my way,
 Windows tinted so the sun shines grey,
 Can't wait to get away,
 I want to leave this place,
 Like a palace for the malice and the lost of faith,
 "Hardcore" gangsters talkin' out the side of they face,
 Don't want to get down man, they scared of the mace,
 Say crap a new charge, but they fighting the case,
 Lose the trial and get sentenced away,
 Cry on their visiting day,
 Man I hope he doesn't cry when he gets to YA,
 Or get loud to cause a scene so staff can
 "Save the day",
 I'm locked, stuck,
 With a bunch of ninjas
 See I'm locked crap,
 Can't wait to see my ninjas
 See I'm trapped lost,
 I hear my time-a-tickin'
 And I can't stop the clock
 So that's the cost of living
 LOCKED!

-R-Mac, Fresno

From The Beat: You've got a true knack for rapping and poetry! Wow! Your words lend insight into the reality of JJC. It's a really depressing place, and it ain't the place for a young, intelligent, talented man like you. When it feels like the walls are closing in, keep using your words to break through them—keep your spirits high, keep your voice alive.

It's Hard To Change

When I was only twelve, I started being outside — not just outside playing with kids my age, but hangin' with the generation before mines. I always liked hangin', because there was always something fun to do. But what I didn't know was once you're off the porch, there ain't no turnin' back. I was into smoking weed, poppin' pills, sippin' on Bo Lean. I and even started pistol tottin'.

After you are so into one lifestyle, it's hard to change your life around. I have been to YGC three times in the past three months. First, I came in October for a robbery. Second, I came in December for a terrorist threat. Between my release in November and my detention in December, I was actually trying to make my own change. When I was let out, I started to go to school every day on time, to every class.

During my winter break, I was falsely accused of a terrorist threat. The investigator on my case told me that the lady didn't say she was threatened, but that she felt threatened. All this has put a hold on my life and school, and when I get out, I plan on doing good.

-Thuggin' Too Hard, San Francisco

From The Beat: There's never a time when you can't turn back and change the path you're on. Is it hard? Of course it is, but if you don't make the hard choice to turn back, you'll be making the hard choice to give up years of your life to others, either on the street or behind walls. We applaud your decision to try to get your life back on track, so don't let this setback keep you from that goal. Pick yourself up again, and keep walking forward.

Big Change In The World

I want and I hope something good happen to my country. I want the President from this country to help the immigrant people because they have a lot of things happen to them in this country. I hope that, too, for my people in Honduras.

You know, sometimes we came to this country to help in making our own money. I been keeping my eyes on this country, and it's a lot of people there, they don't want us in this country. But we just want to work for make more money in this hated country.

I want to say to the President, do not forget about us. God bless us.

-Lp, Marin

From The Beat: What would you like the new President to do to make the immigrant life easier here? If you break the laws of this country while living here, what do you think the consequences should be? We know you want to make life better for yourself and your family by coming here, so how can you convince other Americans that you also deserve a chance?

I'm My Own Worst Enemy

The time I was my worst enemy is right now. What I did before I came here, I was improving on my grades. I studied more; I did more activities to keep away from bad stuff. The reason why is because my old friends from middle school who made me do it, and I decided to have fun. But in the end, I learned my lesson.

For me, change is what I'm going to do after I get out. I'm going to study more often, stay out of trouble, pay attention in class, respect my elders. After I saw my mom when I was in this, I felt bad. I thought about it. One day I decided to change my life to be a better person.

-Lesson Learned, San Francisco

From The Beat: One of the hardest things to do is to say "no" to friends — but having the courage to say "no" can spell the difference between freedom or not. We hope you keep the wonderful promises you make here, not just to make your mom feel better, but to make your life better. (From now on, please choose just one topic, and not all three. We combined two of your pieces into this one. And don't forget to put your name down.)

The Only Thing Alive

My worst enemy is inside of me. I follow on paths which lead me towards jail. My soul is dead but my body is the only thing alive.

I am fighting but I'm always sinning. The devil's happy and he's always grinning. He loves how solid his soldier is and he's proud of me for putting in work like a crazy vato.

I love my hood and I love Vacaville, California. Nobody will ever take that away from me. You can take me away from my hood, but you can't take the hood away from me. Plus it's on my back so every time I see it I smile. Hahaha

-Droopy, Solano

From The Beat: We've heard that we all have a mind, body, and soul-or spirit. So how's that mind doing? Do you miss your soul? (Is it possible it's not dead-just rusty?) You can love your town, your friends, your community without having to die or commit crimes for them. Why serve the devil—if you have a choice, and you do. Why not serve your best, highest self? There's much more to lose, and much more to gain.

A New Life

My life is movin' too fast and it took me a loss to gain knowledge on this. I mean I already knew, but it's really startin' to hit me now, 'cause I'm down, an' problems keep comin' at me. I'm tryin' to make sense of how it got to this point.

I've lost one of the females I love the most. The wife did some good, but the bad that come with it ain't too good. Pops keep sayin' he comin' and don't come. I don't want shhh, but get this shhh ova wit'. I wanna get out, 'cause all these songs is gon' eventually drive me crazy, 'cause I'm months away from female contact. A ninja really need some weed right now, 'cause the Ranch ain't doin' nothing to help. The so-called teachers ain't doin' shhh but tryin' to wash ninjas.

Whenever I touch a blunt or anything like that, then I'ma know it's time fo' me to sit an' think 'bout how I'ma start my life ova, 'cause 2008 wasn't a good year. I took more losses than gains, but what I did gain was knowledge. I learned that no matta what, when you down an' really pay attention to shhh, dependin' on what it is, it'll get to you. An' ninja, when you down, you vulnerable to everything. Yo' emotions basically control you, 'cause a majority of my losses was my fault.

This year I'ma spend a lot more time wit' myself an' think about more. I'ma hop in the whip an' go chill with a few blunts, ease my mind, an' think 'bout my next move on anything. I'ma try to do this every morning, and every night befo' I go to sleep, unless I'm so far out my body I can't get back in. I'ma stay out, but do me, ya feel me?

A lot of ninjas can't even be trusted nowadays. Ninjas is snitchin' on some otha shhh. I'ma keep my circle solid. I can't go do no mo' time. I'm eighteen now, so I gotta be on my shhh. Don't get it twisted, I'm still the same-ass ninja, but I'm thinkin' more 'bout shhh, 'cause I got a couple people I talk to. But somehow I still feel separated and lonely, but it's a whole different story afta either the exit exam or June, 'cause I'm on some brand new shhh, disrespectful as a four-letter word.

-Cam, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like you are maturing, recognizing your responsibility for choices you've made. We can't be sure from this what this new awareness will mean when you finally touch down, but we hope it means that you have connected the dots between action and their consequences. You say you're the same as you always were, but we're not so sure. Where do you think the thinking you plan to do when you mellow out (with your blunts) will take you? What is the "whole different story" we can expect from you after "the exit exam or June"? In short, what changes do you foresee in your future that will make it different from your past?

Losing Something Important

Well, I don't know the topic but I feel like writing. I am a seventeen year old boy, I have lived and been raised by my grandparents. I have seen a lot in my life that I shouldn't have stuff that most people never have and never will. When I was little it was tough seeing my mom have many different guys in and out of the house. She lost my brothers and sisters because she was doing drugs all of the time.

In October of last year, I met this beautiful girl, who was just breathtaking. She was six or seven months pregnant the, and I told myself I didn't care, I had to have her. We got together seven months after that. Things were great then, her son was great too. He calls me dad, and won't even let his real father hold him. They lived with me for a while, but now I am locked up, and I think that I have lost her.

I think that the point of me telling this story is because I asked myself who I was really hurting by getting in trouble. And now I ask you all the same thing. Are you really hurting yourself or are you hurting others? I think that it is the people that love and care about us that we are really hurting, and why that is bad is because we love and care about them back. We don't let others hurt them, so why do we keep causing them pain?

The little boy that I was went from seeing too much too young, to not seeing at all, and now I have decided that the trouble is not worth the hearts of the ones who did nothing to deserve the pain that I have caused them.

-Jonathan, Fresno

From The Beat: Great advice Jonathan. And just so you know, this works both ways, you did not deserve the pain that you were caused either as a child, so to forgive yourself now, forgive others from the past, and you can move on for the better.

Keep My Mind Right

This Juvenile Hall life, it ain't for me / even though it's little stuff, I'm only seventeen / I need to get out, this really ain't koo / I'm missing out on a lot of stuff, especially school / I always say I ain't trippin', but I really am / I'm trying to keep my mind right, doin' the best I can / I ain't have much to say, but I will next week / Until then have a nice day Beat. Peace.

-Lil Rolo, Alameda

From The Beat: Keep doing the best you can! Peace back.

Hope

Well Beat, today I don't really want to write about anything besides hope. What is hope to me and you? The first thought that pops in my mind when I think about hope is do I have it? What is it? And such and such on.

To me, hope is something you wish for. Sometimes it can and it can't happen, but one thing for sure is that as long as we live, we always have to have hope.

The way I look at it is if I can visualize it, it is possible, no matter what the circumstances are. Like for instance, I'm looking at 35 to life, but I can't really guarantee that 'cause the next thing I know I can be out in the outs posted up with my fam bam.

But I have hope, and with my hope come along with faith. I'll get out one day.

-Lil' Cash, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Without hope, there is not much point in moving forward. So we admire and endorse the message you are giving here. We are reminded of a song from our youth (we haven't heard it in years) called, "When You Walk Through A Storm," and one of the verses goes like this: "Walk on.. Walk on.. With hope in your heart/ And you'll never walk alone/ You'll never walk alone." Don't ever give it up!

Getting Locked Up Is Motivation To Change

What up with this Beat? This yo' boy, BR. I came to y'all today with words from the real. So many young people gettin' locked up nowadays, it's not even funny. It should never be funny. It should be motivation for ones that's in juvenile hall, even me.

Every time when I read a Beat Within, I always read something about somebody sayin' that they hate juvenile hall. But yet, we the ones that puttin' ourselves in here. You can make a mistake once, but turn around and say "I made another one," and it won't happen. Huh? A mistake is made once and once only. A mistake you learn from and it don't happen again.

I was like that when I was young, with school and the streets. I was always told, "You keep doin' what you doin' and you will end up somewhere you don't want to be." And look at me—not in jail, but somewhere I don't want to be. But when I get out, I'm gonna change, and that's a promise.

-Br, San Francisco

From The Beat: Are you saying that if you keep making the same "mistake," it's not really a mistake any more because you know what to expect? If so, we agree with you. We like this piece very much, but you could make it much stronger if you gave us some specific examples of what you plan to change when you get out. (We can't print your last name, so we put your initials instead.)



Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama

Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama...

Obama is the president of the new year stepping up to play the part and get them millions. You can't stop 'im; you can't knock 'im. Change is coming! Put yo' sword up Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama...

Obama finta get us up some new jobs so we can put clean money back on the block and get our kids some big money on a stock. Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama, Obama...

Obama! I can't believe it's real, but this shhh is ill. We coming up in a new way. He got a better deal. The White House, black now with two little girls and his wifey down.

-Kirstin, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is, indeed, a new day in American history. But at the same time, one man — President or not — cannot change things without us changing things ourselves. So, in that spirit Kirstin, what change do YOU plan to bring to this new day?

Words of Inspiration

"A man in old age is like a sword in a shop window. Men that look upon the perfect blade do not imagine the process by which it was completed. Man is a sword, and daily life is the workshop. And God is the artificer, and those cares which beat upon the anvil, and file the edge. And eat in, like acid. .. No pain, no palm, no thorns, no throne, no glory, no cross, no crown."

My dad gave me a book to read, and said "look for the quotes you need." See, I never been in jail before, but now that I am able to see the inside, I know when I get out I'm not coming back. People say Oh never say never but that's BS because I know I can prevent myself from coming back here, just like I put myself in the position to be here. So could you prevent yourself from coming back here, just think about it,

-Lil' Dele, Alameda

From The Beat: One thing that is clear is that you have a father who loves you. We are glad he shared this book with you, glad you shared this quote with The Beat, and most glad that you stepped up and shared the meaning that this quote has for you, the strength it has given. You have come to a dark place, and found light there.

The Change

What's up beat? Shhh man I got a lot on my mind tonight. Let me start by saying my name is Michael from Hayward, and I am in Alameda County Juvenile Hall right now. I get out in April, I got here in December. Well it is better than going to a group home.

Well tonight I am going to write about changing my life for the good. Well this is what I need to start on: stop gang banging, get a job, go back to school, spend time with my fam, start being a dad to my son, find a good lady, and do something with my life. What I want to do when I am 18 is work for Santa Clara County VTA like my dad. I miss him a lot.

Well to all in the hall you need to start looking at yo life. Do you want to be locked up for yo whole life? Change it before it is too late. I am changing slowly, soon I am going to look back and say I made it.

Well time is up to all keep yo head up, stand tall and stay strong, much love.

-Michael, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks for writing Michael, this is an inspiring piece. You know what you want, you know you can achieve it, and you know how to get there. Spend the rest of your time here working that plan out more, so when you get out you know exactly what to do from the first day.

I'm My Own Worst Enemy

Today I'm here to write about how I have been my own worst enemy since the last time I was locked up.

I remember how eight months ago when I was released from the Ranch, I told myself and my family that I wouldn't mess up any more. But as soon as I got back to the same old streets, it started all over.

I was being selfish wanting to drink and smoke that I forgot about the people who really love me and want me to do good. Now I understand what I was doing wrong. I was being my own worst enemy. Drugs corrupted my mind to hide the loved ones in my heart.

-Vest, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The difference between the "you" who acted selfishly, forgetting those who love you, and the "you" who wrote this piece is the difference between a child and a responsible young man. It takes some of us longer to grow up than others, but growing up is what it's all about, and it appears to us that is what's happening to you. (At the same time, if drugs are a problem, then address that problem directly through NA or some other program, so that you will not again find your mind corrupted, and so that you will not again betray those you love or yourself.)

In These Times

There's no tears on my pillow
 But there's pain in my heart
 Hitting directly on the mark
 Like a aimed and shot dart
 I remain strapped in chains
 Watching days pass in vein
 I'm on a mission to maintain
 Not to mention release the strain
 It's just me and my composure
 Under pressure with no closure
 Now playtime is done and over
 Still no weakness from this soldier
 Hectic measures for hectic times
 Revenge served cold for dropping dimes
 Committed loyalty remains as prime
 Staring clear of fool struck mimes
 I got a demon lurking at my side
 Or is it an illusion of the mind
 Twisted madness is just my kind
 So what I see is what I find
 My rage ignites like dynamite
 Set it off now it's on tonight
 Do or die with every ounce of might
 'Cause pride forever holds my sight

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Loyalty to who or what "remains as prime?" As evidence by your continued imprisonment (enslavement), your loyalty to a gang code (someone else's, not even of your own creation) means disloyalty to yourself, your freedom and those who could benefit greatly from it through the leadership you could provide. No Grumpy, we're just not impressed by your fealty to shot-callers on the outs because we know, as you should, that it leads to having to answer to shot-callers behind these walls, forever keeping you from being your own shot-caller, the master of your own fate, the captain of your own ship! We continue to be mightily impressed with your skills and pray for the day they will be put to use for a cause so much bigger than the narrow little one you've settled for.

Love Sick Blues

The night is dark and still as I walk the silent, lonely streets.

I shiver as the frosty wind flow past.
 My mind, dark and desolate crowed with lovelorn memories of my woes.

As I reminisce these languishing thoughts.

I continue my stroll of pending damnation.

With no destination I walk the abyss before me.

I pray to Amadeus to lead my path and march my soul.

To guide me to freedom and clear my mind,
 to deliver me to me final curtain fall in peace.

-Fog, Fresno

From The Beat: You should consider being a writer.

Everyone's Talking Change

Am I talking change? Hell yeah.

We have an African American President!

I need to make a change and don't be giving black people a bad reputation.

I'm also going to change by going to school, maybe get a job, the reason I say maybe on the job is because school and a job would be heavy

on my shoulders right now.

I think all people should change it does not matter about the race.

-K-Dre, Alameda

From The Beat: Change can be a good thing, and when things aren't working for you, a necessary thing. With the new year and a new president, now is the perfect time to put your ideas of change into action.

Change

What's good all in here? It's the homeboy Shrek up in the Max. I'm in here chillin' just waiting to get out on Feb. 15. I'm finally going to be getting out, I been locked up since January 11th of '08. Today I'm going to write about change.

Well when I get out I'm going to go to school and get a job. I'm not going to get out and start smoking and drinking and doing all the stuff that I did that got me here.

So this is my plan for change: First get out and enroll myself into school and apply for some jobs. Oh, but before I do that, I'm going to chill with my daughter and get back with my baby mama.

Second I'm going to stop doing drugs and alcohol. Also I'm not going to run from probation anymore or violate.

Thirdly, I'm going to stack my chips, get a car, and get my own place.

Lastly, I'm going to stay out as long as I can and give my daughter things that I never had and keep her away from the same struggles that I endured. Oh yeah, and I'm going to try and get along with my family and start giving them money to help out around the house. Add up all the times you've been locked up, see what it amounts to like all the months, it adds to years. Surprising huh? This is not time that we can ever get back. So when you get out, try and do good.

I send my love and respect to those of you locked down, I know how you're feeling, but keep your head up and keep moving.

-Shrek, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is so awesome, Shrek!! You've organized your plans and your hopes which make it much easier to achieve your goals. Not many adults are as organized as you so great job! We know that great things are in store for you, just stick to your plans and don't let anyone persuade you otherwise. How bad do you want it?



A Problem Today

I think a huge problem we have today that affects everyone is global warming. People I think should be more aware of what's going on with their planet.

I think a way Obama could create more jobs is by making jobs that are beneficial to the problems we have today. Millions of jobs could be created on the topic of global warming. For instance, professional trash pickers who get paid for it, or maybe lowering the price of recyclables to encourage people to recycle more.

Our planet is dying and it should be one of the first things on his agenda. Not only is global warming affecting our climate, but it's hurting wildlife and nature's beauty.

People can't think it's going to be around forever because it isn't and they should be more appreciative of what they have and not take things for granted like our planet.

-Megan, Alameda

From The Beat: You're absolutely right - global warming is a huge problem that a lot of people don't pay attention too. It not only affects nature and animals, it affects us too. Everything from cancer to asthma is exacerbated by global warming, and eventually if we don't do anything to stop it, all of our land will be under water someday. Keep getting your message out!

Sitting in my Room

When I'm in my room I think a lot about my mom and my best friend.

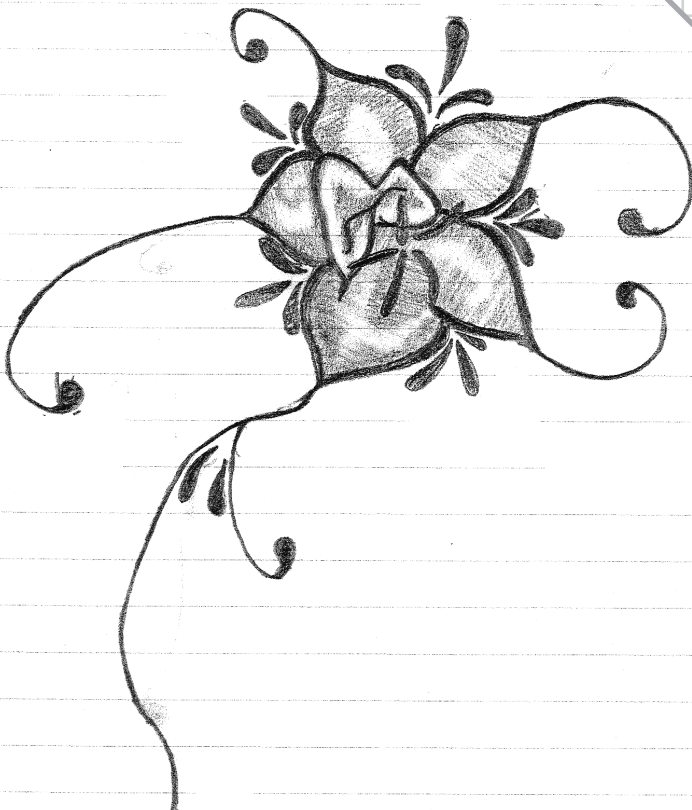
My best friend's name is Johnny. We've been best friends for three years. I think about him a lot because he really don't like me being in here. He wrote me a letter saying he wants me to get my life together and stop robbing people, I be thinking like why do he care so much. He must really love me. Then it came to me, he don't want nothing to happen to me like I can try and rob the wrong person and get shot or really hurt.

I sit in my room and write raps about him when I'm at home every day. I love him and care about him a lot.

My mother, wow I love her so much but I know I'm breaking her heart in a million pieces by doing the same thing over and over again. Like when she comes to see me I see a lot of stress in her eyes. I just want to do the right thing not only for her but for myself.

-Jonesha, Alameda

From The Beat: You're obviously listening and taking in what your loved ones are telling you - you're thinking about it. Keep listening to them, and keep talking to them, especially when you feel stress or pressure to do things you know are wrong.



Rock the Party

Girl you know we can / Party all night long / When I step on the scene / I rock the party / Fresh Jays new T / And some Ed Hardy / White Diamond long chain and a new phone / Get drunk pop a pill then I'm in the zone / Bust off like 09 Rocket Ship / I'm tryna find a lil female... / And I ain't trippin if her dude here [cutting it] / Cause my game so tight Ima be all over it / At the end of the night I got a new girl, hella thick, brown skin and some long curls / Girl you know we can party all night / See Ima king try to get with me / If you wanna date a prince then you lookin' for Reese / If you searching for a guy like Tony then let me tell you lil mamma ain't nobody like me...

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: What a song. We had to edit a bit, keep it PG and respectful. We figure if women are important to you, you must want to stay out of jail...how do you plan to stay free once you're released?

Obama is Brave, But....

Obama is fake. When he gets in office, he's gonna end up doing all kinds of shhh just like Bush, cause' black, and black ain't right. I don't trust black people, and I can say that because I AM black, actually really I don't trust anyone, especially black people, 'cause they'll shoot you and they are set up artists.

No, I'm just playin'. I trust black people, I trust all races. I ain't racist against my own kind. They is grimy though.

Naw, I'm just playin'. Really it's just that I'm afraid he's gonna get killed. Hell that's stupid!

No, that's brave, but stupid too.

-Billy

From The Beat: You started out just joking around, but in the end you hit on something deep. There is a fine line between bravery and stupidity, and Obama has to walk that line every day. In a way, don't you walk that line too, with the decisions you have to make out on the street?

Almost Free

It's Lil' Boobie I finally beat my case I walked out the courtroom and put a smile on my face. Now I can taste my freedom. All charges dropped. You know ya boy beat 'em. A ninja snitched on me but I'm still bout to be free; me and my lil Bra T. And when we get out, you know we gone eat. We bout to bounce back on our feet; bounce back quick to them streets. We won't be back in this. Peace until then. Almost FREE. Beat stay up. Until next time, hopefully by then I'm out. Yo boy.

-Young Boobie

From The Beat: We hear your excitement, that's great news! We're very happy to hear you have no intention of coming back to jail. What are you planning to do to stay free?

Finally Going

Whatsup with The Beat? I been here 13 months, and I'm finally going to the Y after waiting 4 months. SO yeah, his is my last Beat. I got 2 more years, then it's official; I touchdown.

I can't wait to touchdown, see my family, see my ninjas, get some pearl. They gave me a strike that's messing me up. Something crucial, I can't do shhh no more. I definitely can't get another gun charge. Ima be cool when I touchdown because heck wit jail, I ain't coming back.

-Lano

From The Beat: Write to us if you can. Use your time well for you, read and write and work on your skills for your future. Take care.

Stimulating The Economy

I would want the President to give the youth in my community a job where the youth build more high schools.

-Vaikele

From The Beat: We want youth to have more jobs too, and wonder why you want them to build high schools? Do you think there's not enough? Do you think youth would know how to build high schools where youth would want to attend?

Good Things For Myself and My Family

Dear Beat Writers...well, this is Knuckles from Livermore. I'm up in camp right now, doin' my thang. I'm finna graduate this thang at the end of February or early March. I'm hella mad. This weekend I missed my curfew call 'cause I fell asleep and the phone had a missed call when I woke up.

So now I got a 12 hour pass, but I ain't tryna have my parents waste gas just so I can be out for 12 hours so I'm mobbing it out. When I get out I'm goin' start going back to school, try and get my driver's license.

I'm going to try and get a job. Other than that I'm going to be doing some good things for myself and my family. You still goin' catch me with the homies posted on the block. Still goin' be doin' my thang.

-Lil' Knuckles

From The Beat: The fact that you even take the time to consider your parents' gas shows how much honor you have, and love and respect for the people in your life. It's almost like that is the true you, and that all of the rest of the bad stuff, the drinking, the trouble, are just BS that get in the way of the true you! Do you think that BS could hold you back when you are released? Have you got a plan to avoid it?

Oakland Streets

As I sit in my room I start to think of the shhh I've been through in my life: been shot, shot at, shhh don't change in these Oakland streets. Ninjas serving rocks of cream, smokin' weed, sippin' on bo, just to lean. That shhh don't mean shhh, it messes up your brain.

Shhh don't change in these Oakland streets, ninja talking shhh, and get hit. Well now you know, Shhh don't change, in these Oakland Streets.

-Young J

From The Beat: Some say the only power we really have is over ourselves. Have you changed?

What's Going On?

I ask myself what's going on in life?

My answer was I can't say because my life ain't straight.

First they judge us as robbers

The court bam us as monsters

What's goin' on? Women is havin' sex with women,

women is havin' sex with men

Men is havin' sex with men

And tell me that the world ain't comin' to an end

We got a black President for the first time

People say they gon' change but ready to commit they worst crime

Now I'm thinking about leavin' alone

And I'm gon' end this with what's goin' on.

-Young Arco

From The Beat: Well what is going on with you? You say you can't say because your life aint straight, yet you have a right to your opinion, your perspective, no matter what. Men and women have been having sex with men and women for a long long time, that's not new. Change is in the air with our new President, and we hope some that say they're going to change too, do! What do you mean, "leavin' alone," where to?

This One Might Make You Cry

They gave that boy fifty 'cause the witness stayed alive. His friends could have killed him and they really tried. Said they gonna send you some pictures they told a damn lie.

Didn't write you one letter, not one time.

If you got ten years or better you should be ready to cry.

Callin' people on the phone got you feelin' like "why?"

They got you feelin' solid but I know you want to cry.

I bet you couldn't picture this when you was five

that you could shoot a girl and she wouldn't stay alive.

Taking somebody's life like that makes you feel that pride.

Ten years from now I wonder if you gonna slide.

If God don't forget you I wonder where you gonna hide.

If killing is a must then we on the same side.

But I ain't getting' caught 'cause I love my life.

Posted in a cell all day all night.

How many years until that boy sees daylight,

robbing a food place done destroyed your life.

Now you on black in white for the rest of your life.

(Rest in Peace Wayne)

-Dirt Laden, Alameda

From The Beat: Dirt Laden, your writing is just getting better and better. We hope you keep using your rhymes to tell these important stories of life on the block.

Berkeley

I don't want to put my name on this paper so representing me is the city of Berkeley. I came in here to Alameda County Juvenile Hall on December 11, 2008 and I'm here to this day. It's only been some weeks now, but it seems like I've been in here for longer.

It's my first case, and I was caught with six felonies. The judge wasn't in on my court date and they sentenced me to six months. I'm here 'till June 3 and that's my next court date. The time I'm in here is passing by all fast 'cause we stay busy by doin' stuff like school and LME and other stuff.

-Berkeley

From The Beat: It's good that you are staying busy. What do you think you are getting out of these programs? Are you setting goals for yourself for the time you are in here?

Juvenile Hall

Man this shhh gets old, everybody around me getting released except for me. Ninjas always talkin' bout how long they been locked up can't do they time.

I'm not going to sit here and cry and keep saying I can't wait until I get out. I could do my time, but when I get out, I'm fina go bad! I'm fina pick up a couple bottles and get drunk. But until then I'm going to do my time and not let it do me.

-Big Zimit

From The Beat: You say you don't like it when people talk about being locked up, but you start out by saying everyone's getting out but you! We understand you want to get drunk, but is that going to get you where you want to go? Do you have any other plans when you are released?

What Could Be Done?

Cook, for the homeless.

-Fat Boy

From The Beat: We agree that it's not right people go hungry. Next time could you write more about what you're thinking? There's so many things that need to be done, why is this problem most important to you?

Qvole Beat

I don't like the topics for today so I'm just gonna write about how I feel. Well today I'm doing good, I'm just here in Max 2 waiting to go to YA. I don't got that much goin' on, so that's all I got to say. Al rato.

-Gilberto

From The Beat: Gilberto we always want to know how you feel. Do you plan to keep in touch when you go to YA? How do you plan to use your time well, to better equip you for the world when you are eventually released?

Worst Enemy

I'm my worst enemy and I'll tell you why. Posted on the block and try to survive. This gang shhh ain't funny, and ain't easy. Ninja getting shot.

Well me, they almost took my lil' brother's life away, over gangs, they don't know respect like I do. I take it to heart, I'm loyal to my family, and I respect them as well. Loyalty and respect are the two words of the day.

-Young J

From The Beat: How can you be your own best ally in this life? How can you be there for your brother and your future and what you've decided is really most important to you? Grow your best self, don't follow your own worst enemy-

Locked up Four Times

My name is Jamon and I've been locked up four times. The first time I came in for a robbery that I didn't do. So I got out in three days. And the second time I came up in here or an armed robbery that I did, and the third time I came up in a year was for a home supervision. The fourth time I came in here for an EM failure. I'm only 12 years old and I've been in jail four times. That's not a good thang.

-Lil' Jamon

From The Beat: A lot of 12 year olds haven't yet achieved the wisdom you have, they don't realize what you just wrote, that getting locked up is "not a good thing." Now that you have this knowledge, and a second chance, we hope you live by what you've learned! You deserve your youth. Don't hand it over to the system!

I Am Back

What's up, it's me Chucho. Well I came back to camp. I been here for a solid month. It's good though! It's been boring lately, all I am here for is wasting time. I could be out there right now kickin' it with my girl or my family. This sucks, I want to leave again. But I ain't. I only got three months of this shhh, since I got here all I do is go to the weight room to waste time.

-Chucho

From The Beat: Welcome back. We know it was a tough few months, but we are glad to hear that you are sticking it out... because it won't be wasted time if it helps you reach wisdom, and helps you focus on your goals. As for the struggles, don't forget, divided we stand, united we fall. If all the minorities worked together, they might just make real changes in the system, the hood, the world. It's tragic to think of all that energy being spent on fighting, when life is already hard enough.

Worst Enemy

I think I was my worst enemy when my mom wanted me to come home, I decided to stay out over the night. I ended up going to jail with a pistol and all I was thinking was "I should have stayed home and blew some tree while watching a movie."

-Gary

From The Beat: Hopefully you'll have another chance to get this one right. Mom's definitely like their boys to be safe. Are you ever your own best ally?

What I Want In Life Is Peace

I want to have peace in every hood
I know so nobody will get hurt.
I see that it might not happen because people think differently.
I'm gonna do something right for myself
I'm tired of being put in the same place at the wrong time.
It's hurting me and my family.
I got a baby on the way and I don't want my kid livin' the same life
as me and that's for sure. That's why I want so much peace in life.

-Donta

From The Beat: It is heartening to read your words. It's not often that we hear young men who are searching for peace. What do you think needs to happen, so that our communities become less violent?

Worst Enemy

I feel like I'm my worst enemy because every time that something good is about to happen to me I mess it up. Like when I was about to go to court, I smoked some weed and I went to jail. I smoked that weed because I wanted to, and who was gonna stop me? but now I wish I didn't.

-Festy

From The Beat: It sounds like you need to work on making the right choices for yourself. If you could do that day over again, what would you have done instead of smoke weed? In the future, what will help you to really think before you make wrong choices like that one?

It's All About Change

Well let me start by saying what's up and how are you all doing. But anyways I'm going to change when I get out. They are going to be sending me to a group home and I'm gonna do it for most important for my family, because I need to be there for them.

I've been doing all this shhh and they shouldn't have to go through this. They don't deserve this, and also I want to change for my baby that's on the way. I want to be a father, and be a good dad and a good role model and lost but not least I'ma be 18 and all my things that I've done as a minor is gonna be wiped away. Thank you and I'm out. Love...

-Derick

From The Beat: You have grown so much during the time we've known you, and we know you've been through some sorrows as well. Please know that our thoughts and best hopes are with you as you take your next step.

Ten Years From Now

Dear Beat, Ten years from now, I'm goin' to be 25 years old. I'ma have a wife and kids, a good job, hopefully. Or if I don't have a wife and kids yet, I'll look for one, then I'm still gonna be out there kickin' it on the block with the BG's doin' my thang that's all I know what I'm gonna be 10 years from now.

I want to stay in my neighborhood because I know a lot of people in my neighborhood then, because it's a safe place to me. I want my job to be a good job that I could make a lot of money.

I want to be a soccer player, hopefully I could make it.

-Junior

From The Beat: You have a lot of good dreams, so we hope that you don't spend too much time on that block, because we'd love to see you get that good job and have a chance to play more soccer!

On My Way

I am on my way to the Rights of Passage program in Nevada for a 9-12 month program. I am not looking forward to going but I just have to try and make the best out of my situation and use the resources that the program has to offer.

I have a child due on July 27th, so I really would like to complete the program so I can be a father to my child and continue on with my life.

While I am at ROP I am going to play baseball and will try to get a scholarship to college.

I am going to be 18 in August so I have to start making adult choices and realize that what I do not only affects me, but it also affects my family and the people that care about me. I am tired of letting myself and everybody else down and I want to turn my life around and live it to its full potential.

-B

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing your hopes and dreams for the future with the Beat. We hope you are developing a plan that will help you reach your dreams. For one thing, what are the challenges you think you will face along the way, and how do you plan on dealing with them?

Still Here...

What's up fool? I just want to give a shout out to those that's locked up right now. I'm mad because it was three times where I could have went home and with three different aunties. They said it was cool for me to come but at the time when I was going to leave they caved.

Now I'm about to go to a group home, after I had the chance on the outs. I don't know where they are going to send me. Hopefully the people hurry up and interview me. It's been a week since my last court date, so it won't be long. This is my first long group home, so I wonder how its going to be.

Well that's it for now, and to all stay up.

-Loony

From The Beat: Keep your head up Loony! Maybe this group home is your chance at starting again.... Tehn again, you'll only succeed when you are ready to make a change in your life.

It Ain't For Life

The Beat asked "What are you going to miss the most while you serve your time?"

I will miss my mother, my unborn baby, my baby momma, and my ninjas. They got me right now, but I'll be back. It ain't for life. I just gotta man up and do my time. And I've got to stop doin' things that I think will get me off easy. So yeah, I'm a do this time and get out of there.

-Jb

From The Beat: Wow, it's good to hear you have so much love waiting for you on the outs, a mom, a baby, a girl, friends... Don't just DO the time, ask staff to help you USE the time, so you can get stronger and smarter and more able to stay free once you are released.

Your Own Worst Enemy

I remember I went to a group home and I had 2 more weeks to go, and then I hit someone for stealing my clothes.

And another time was when I was at a camp in Salinas, I had 3 more days, until I tried to run because I missed my grandma too much.

-Seddie

From The Beat: Sometimes it's hard to see the big picture when you have a lot of feelings about what's going on right then. Where's your grandma now? When are you good for yourself? What do you do right?

Stop The City

Stop the city, the city stinks
No one knows what the city thinks
Stop the city it's an old man's dream
Stop the city it's a shhh machine
Stop the city and liberate ?
You wanna live a life and the city gets ya!
When someone tempts you, you can't refuse
It's getting colder and you know you've got nothing to lose.

-Josh

From The Beat: The city can feel like an animal sometimes, big, hungry, breathing hot. With the youth as its prey. You did a great job here of describing how it feels. If the city is a lion, let your voice be its hunter!

Sis' Don't Trip

If you did a high speed chase
Sis' don't trip
If yo' grandpa died
Sis' don't trip
If yo' mama was on drugs
Sis' don't trip
If yo' brotha in jail
Sis' don't trip
If yo' daddy beat you
Sis' don't trip
If you cant' pay yo' phone bills on time
Sis' don't trip
If you ran from the cops
Sis' don't trip
If you got time
Sis' don't trip
If people hatin' on you
Sis' don't trip
If yo' loved ones died
Sis' don't trip
I'm tellin' you don't trip 'cause
It's gon' get better at the end.

-Guilla Boe

From The Beat: We love the way you took a popular song and then added a twist all your own, and so now we ask you, do you believe your own words? Do you take courage from them? Are you speaking to yourself, or to other young women who have struggled? Or a little bit of both?

I Am Legend

Me I'm a get money ninja

-Bill Gates

From The Beat: Well we sort of guessed that from the name you chose. We had to edit, Bill. Anything legal or positive you'd like to be known for? We always want the Beat to help make peace...

I Know God Got Me, But I Gotta Have Myself

My favorite tattoo is my skull head I got on my right arm. It has flames on top of it the meaning is just "live." That's what it says under the skullhead.

A change - it's stressful being in here, your family stressing, not just you. You gotta make a "a change" If you wanna stay out of jail you gotta make "a change" not for the worst, for the better, and it's on you if you gonna change. I know God got me, but I gotta have myself. I'm gonna be my own down and I refuse.

-Lil' Fred

From The Beat: What are some of the ways you can "have yourself"... We'd love to hear them. What are some of the things you can do to live up to the powerful message in your tattoo?

I'm Still Here

I'm real ice City some people may call me rude
and if they wasn't in my business they wouldn't know
about my attitude.

I'm not a book so you can't judge me by my cover
Or read the book and get an idea about me
And I'll mop anybody so run up if you doubt me
It is '09 but I'm stuck here in jail and if this place was on
fire they'd call this place hell

Off top I'm yellin'

RIP momma an' Laronda an' my bro' Gary too

'Cause on 9/20/06

I was there. Officer G shot you, it was supposed to be a
Sweet Sixteen for me, but you laid there face down lookin'
like you was sleepin'

shots to the back and then he cuffed you too, that 's why
I'm rude.

RIP uncle IV an Stace, Doobie, Stevie, and JaeJae too.

It's too many fallen soldiers but nothing I can do.

So I'm gonna try to live my life, but

Every day I wake I be like damn, I'm still here.

-Rayna

From The Beat: We chose "I'm still here" as your title because after, the pain you've felt, the losses you've taken, you are STILL HERE - and your poem gives voice to your strength and sorrow and the stories you have to share. You were sitting when you wrote this, but the poem stands tall. Peace.

Stop Smoking

Things that I need to change is to stop smoking because
I spend a lot of money on that, instead of saving money or
spending it on stuff that I need the most.

If I stop smoking I would save my money and probably
focused in school. I would also stop smoking, because
if I wasn't smoking I wouldn't argue as much with my
siblings.

-G

From The Beat: You've gained a valuable insight about your life. What is it about smoking that you like so much? How old were you the first time you smoked? How did it make you feel? Do your parents know? Do your parents also smoke?

Thanks Thib

I'm in this unit in Alameda County Juvenile Hall, and
I am writing to thank my staff for being supportive and
most of all I am thanking my friend this for really looking
out and helping me be successful in my situation.

-Young Detainee

From The Beat: We know we don't need to tell you this, but we will anyway: The best way you can thank staff, or anyone else who cares about you, is to thrive! Be strong, be successful, take whatever they've taught you and apply it to your life. Good luck and send us good news!

Fifteen Minutes of Rec

What's up Beat, my court date been a swirv.

I wanna give a shout out to my homeboy Irv

Doors open man you some bloodthirsty hounds

Irv got the fresh watch

Don't drop that on the ground

Y'all got some 5.0. GO's they really need to go be 5.0.

They speakin on CO like he don't go

What the heck I ain't in the window

I don't want 15 of rec.

-Boy Boy

From The Beat: We loved the laugh you got when this piece was read allowed, and are always happy to print your words, both your lighter pieces and your more serious ones!

Not Stressin'

Man, it's the kid, Lil' Solid, and I've been stuck in this thing for six months. I'm two months overdue, and I'm about ready to get outta this thang, but if you know me seriously the you know I'm not stressin' about nothin', 'cause I'm in this shhh until tha wheels fall off, and my casket drop.

Even though when I do finally got out I have a lotta positive things but with me still bein' stuck in here, hearin' what's goin' outside, and not bein' able to do me with a couple stacks in my pocket like I'm used to, and with all that bein' said, I am America's third most wanted, plus I'm tha' cat the would love to hate, to love, but man just wait until they let tha kid go 'cause like the saying goes, "It's only gonna get worse before it gets any better" but like I said, I ain't stressin' 'bout shhh. I move to care and worry about anything but me, oh yeah. I can't think straight until the wheels fall off.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: It's going to be a huge challenge to stay out of outside drama, but this is a game you can't afford to lose. Are you actively figuring out exactly what concrete steps you need to take to stay out of it? Every old habit in you might be screaming that you need to step up, but Donte, haven't you given the system enough of your youth, haven't you struggled enough, suffered enough? We hope you reach out to every single resource available to you, so you have support in the new positive directions you are getting ready to take.

MLK's Dream

To me Obama is trying to change things for the better of people. I think Obama is doing the right thing.

He's just finishing what our people started. Like what Martin Luther King started. I think that MLK's Dream has finally come true. RIP MLK Jr.

-Young Huss

From The Beat: In his inauguration speech, Obama talked about how his own father wouldn't have been served in a restaurant when he was young, and now his son is president. It's a pretty beautiful thing to think about, and we hope it helps you believe that your dreams can also come true!

Keep Teens Off The Streets

One thing Obama can do with is start more teen programs to keep teens off the streets. You can keep them off the streets by starting interesting programs, such as making documentaries, or sports programs. Something teens are gonna like.

-Ly

From The Beat: This is an excellent recommendation. Have you ever been in a program like this, or known someone who is? The Beat Within has internship programs for teenagers interested in learning how to make short videos and write articles—if you are interested, you should come by our office once you are out!

Can't Wait

What's up Beat, this yo' boy Yogi from Oakland. Today I'm going to write about when I get out. When I get out I'm going to go to school, and get good grades of course. And get my money the right way not robbing people for their stuff. I will have to go to work in order to have money. Then I will help my mom with whatever she needs help in. And I'll go to my program, which is GPS.

'Till next time, see you in the outs: for the people in the hall keep yo head up...

-Yogi

From The Beat: We are glad to hear you talking positive, but what is your plan? How will you focus on school and get a job? What are the steps you need to take?

I Sold Drugs Because I Could Not Find A Job

I think that too clean up the community the city should make a program where all the crimes that Juveniles commit if it is a non-violent crime, the program will have a job for us, within two weeks of our release.

That way we can stay on the right track, because I know I sold drugs because I could not find a job.

-DaShawn

From The Beat: There isn't an official program exactly like this, but believe it or not, there is a program that will help you get a job two weeks from the first time you visit them. They are called America Works, and they are right off the 12th street BART stop. You are right, you deserve choices. Peace.

My Own Worst Enemy Is On The Streets

My own worst enemy is people on the street 'cause people say something about you to somebody else, then next thing you know you have another enemy on the streets and you don't know why, and they want to shoot at you, and fight you, or worst of all they will kill you. But as long as I have God, I don't need to worry bout nothing..

-Lamont

From The Beat: Gossip and rumours are clearly dangerous to your health! What do you do to deal with this?

Straight to Hell

A month or two after my birthday I got sent straight to hell for an incident that happened months before. Only three days in this place I was already feeling like I wanted to break out or just hurt anybody who made me madder than I already was. I never really thought of jail being a hell inside a hell. But at the end of the year, I lost one of my friends in this place.

-G

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear that you had to face these two terrible things. How have you kept your spirits up - where do you find comfort? We know you have found ways to get through this ordeal, so share those ways with The Beat!

Pain

I wish I wasn't here
This is crazy
I would drop a tear
But I ain't no baby
I try to be strong
But it's breaking me down
I wanna go home
But my home is a ghost town
Death all around
And misery lurkin'
Painful sounds
Means someone's hurtin'
I'm almost certain
It's someone I know
I see their body
But the face doesn't show
I look one mo'
And then I see
The one in pain
Is me
Rest in Peace baby Skin

-Young Jay Bee

From The Beat: These lines feel like they were written directly from your soul, speaking to ours, to every reader at The Beat. You take us on a journey right to the center of your truth - we hope that writing these words eased some of your pain.

Optimistic Pessimist

One way that I like to describe me and my thinking is as being an optimistic pessimist. I always know what I want and just how I'm going to do. But the moment something happens that isn't what I planned I do a total 180. I will focus on the negative and how everything is ruined.

An example of this is right now I'm going to a group home, not only have I never been to one, but I'm going to be 18 in less than a week. I feel that all my freedom and independence have been stripped from me. Now I won't be able to graduate with my peers, stay in extra-curricular programs, and the beginning of my adulthood is going to be dictated. The sad thing is my attorney agreed to it without my consent.

I have lost hope, but I'm going to have to play the system's little game.

-Ashley

From The Beat: You say you lost hope, but then there's that optimistic side of your pessimism, right? The side of you that knows that you may have suffered a short term loss but you still have your long term future successes to look forward to? Tell us what your plans are after you skip this hurdle!

I Want to Change

I made a mistake by doing the bad thing that got me in here. When I get out, I want to make a change in my life by going back to school, get a good education so I can get a good paying job, get my high school diploma and a GED.

Also, set a better example for my younger brother and other family members and close friends. Because without a good education you will have nothing in this world, either you will end up homeless, locked up for the rest of your life, drug addict, or even killed.

-Eddie

From The Beat: We're so glad to see that you're looking back at what you've done and realized that you made a mistake instead of blaming other people, like so many of us do!

Talking Change For '09

My resolution for this year is to build a better relationship with my dad and to finish school because I'm about to be 18, and to be smarter and wiser about what I want to do. All and everyone needs to pray and make a goal for 09 for the change and better.

-Melzo Gurl

From The Beat: The new year is the perfect time to make a change, to start fresh. You've set a great goal for yourself, just keep it in your head and follow through even after you get out!

Stop Drinking

The things I want and need to change is to stop drinking.

Because I don't think about all my circumstances before I act. I started drinking when I was a youngster. I was about eleven when I started drinking, and now I drink nonstop.

If I were to stop drinking then I would probably not be in that much of the trouble I been in. I am also trying to be a better father to my son so that he can have a better life than I did.

-Young Mickey

From The Beat: The great Mexican painter Frida Kahlo once wrote "I drink to drown my sorrows, but the damned things have learned how to swim." She learned the hard way that drinking was destroying her life. But because you are away from alcohol in juvy, you are probably learning other ways to "drown your sorrows." What are they? Do you read, write, talk to people, daydream? Maybe you can use these methods to stay sober when you get out?

Learning my Lesson

I made a big mistake by coming to jail because now I have missed out on Christmas and New Years. I'm just praying to God that he can lead me in the right path on Thursday at court and I can just go home.

I didn't want to be in jail, but my bad actions put me here. This place is not for a young teenager to grow up in. I had learned a valuable lesson by being in jail, if I can go to school and learn and clean up in jail, I can learn at school in the real life. If I can clean in jail, I can go home and clean instead of being lazy. I mean, don't nobody want to be in jail but hey, look on the bright side, you not getting in trouble in here. I mean, you can but you will not want to.

My message to the kids and teens out there is stay out of jail.

-S

From The Beat: Sometimes something big has to happen to us so that we can open our eyes and see where we're going in life. Be happy that you went to juvenile hall because there are much more worst consequences that our actions can bring us. We know that you can make it and change, you just have to believe in yourself!

Your Own Worst Enemy

I'm my own worst enemy in a lot of ways. I'll be doing good and I'll mess up, it's like I've had so many bad things happen to me that I won't allow anything good to happen to me. I know it sounds stupid but it's like it's an instinct or something. A time when I was my worst enemy is when I ran from my first group home when I was about to graduate.

-Scotty

From The Beat: It's interesting you say you sabotage your own happiness, because this is something that a lot of people who've been hurt many times do. It takes time to heal, but it's important to not lose sight of what's best for you while still in the healing process. You've got to keep what's best for you in your head.

When I Get Out

I really want to get out and do something with my life, feel me. 'Cause this aint it. I got too much money to make and family that I love and miss to be sitting in here doing nothing. And off the top when I get out of here I'm going to grab me a fresh fit, go eat hella food and be active. Well, pray that court date go well, alright then beat.

-Brittany

From The Beat: We hope that court date goes well, and that when you get out you follow through with your goals. While you've got nowhere to go though, now is the perfect time to figure out this plan in detail - what do you want to do? How can you get there? What's your first step? Work it out!

A Depressing Dream

Sexy smile

With those sexy lips

Thinking bout the first time we ever kissed

Stuck in the moment

Catching the sparkle of light

Wondering if I'm alright

As I go to touch your face and hold on to you tight

I wake up in the dark

And realize

It's the same dream from last night

-Ginger

From The Beat: Dreams can be a great thing or a horrible thing. Dreaming about someone you miss, while tough when you wake up, can be really great while you're in it. Being with him won't be a dream forever - you'll see each other again.

I'm Going to Change

I will change by stop hanging around the wrong people and go to school everyday and not get suspended; I will do everything to keep me busy. I'm going to keep playing sports and try to get to play college football. I will work out everyday and try to be more healthy and try to watch what I eat but when I get out I'm going to eat a lot but I'm going to burn it off by working out everyday. That's how I'm going to change.

-Roshawn

From The Beat: You have some really great ideas to stay out of trouble and get your life back on track. Now put your words to action!

I'm Gonna Do Me

Mom, I'm really sorry for what I did but it didn't happen like they said it did. Sometimes I think that I came here for a good reason, sometimes I think that I'll probably be dead if I wasn't here because too much things are going on in this world, too many of my friends are dying.

I'm tired of this gang life, it's fun and all, but it's my life I'm playing with. I'm just trying to say I love you and I'ma try to stop for you, for my dad, for my family, for me and most important, for my God. I'm going to start going to school, play basketball, and just do me. I'm going focus on my career and be around the right type of people.

-Jahfanie

From The Beat: Gang life can lead you to two places: six feet under or behind bars. Those two places aren't exactly the best places to be or where most people see themselves going. Using your family as motivation is a great way to start, Jahfanie, we wish you the best!

It Runs in My Family

To me jail isn't that bad once you get used to it. I like being free but being here ain't that bad. When I get out and I got to put in work and it involved going back to jail that doesn't mean nothing to me, so I'm not going to think twice about it. Being in jail runs in my family. They all been in and out of jail and prison, that's nothing to be happy about.

I want to break that cycle but I'm not trippin' about going back to jail.

-Jerome

From The Beat: It must be painful to lose so many family members to incarceration - but we hope you don't get "too used" to it, because YOU DESERVE FREEDOM. We all do, and we almost hope you do trip off going to jail, because we trip off imagining you there. What about dreams - raising children, seeing foreign countries, feeling the sun on your face, walking across a graduation stage? You could be the first to lead the way.

Changing My Ways and Start New

This year in 2009, since I been in juvenile hall, I've been thinking 'bout life. I made a decision when I get out I'm going to turn things around in my life. I'm going to start attending school, get better grades, and change. I've seen what's more important then doing crimes and spending my time in juvenile hall, I'd rather be with my loved ones and outside of jail, it's really better.

I just regret doing the things I've done and I just wished that I had never done it but it's life, what is done, is done. So. I'm just doing my time until I get out and I have learned my lesson and that's why I'm going to change my ways and start new.

-Somearnn

From The Beat: We all regret something in our life but we always learn from those regrets. What will you do to make the changes that you want in your life?

Why Me?

Damn, I'm sittin back in jail wonderin why me? They say everything is done for a reason, but shhh, why me? Why do I have to go through this pain? When is it gone stop rainin?

Why do I have nobody to wait for me and love me? Shhh, I'm tired, I just gone do me and cut like scissors straight up. Screw this program, I'm out.

-Destiny

From The Beat: We all go through times where it feels like the world is against us, that we're being treated unfairly by the universe. This feeling sucks, and we're sorry you're going through it right now. Just try to keep in mind that you do have control over what you do. You may not be able to control what happens to you, but you control how you react, what you do with it.

Your Own Worst Enemy

I made my worst enemies by coming here and not doing the right things, hanging out with the wrong friends, and not making good choices.

How I'm going to do better is to stay out of trouble and not hang out with the person that had got me in here.

-Sayvon

From The Beat: This is a great way to start, Sayvon, but have you given these changes any more thought? What will you do to make sure that once you change, you'll never go back to your old lifestyle that brought you to juvie?

Stay 'Cause I Got To Go

I seen life but never twice
'cause you fall upon your dreams
make it hurt in the spot where you drop.
Delay and scream
you want to change
but you can't
because it's really pretty hard,
now you do the wrong things by the devil cards.
I been through it all.
All the pain against a chains.
Now I'm locked behind a door
that won't open for a thang.
Now I'm stuck in a spot
I got to choose
between my fate
I aint eating home meals
I'm eating out a county plate.
And this ain't right,
I got to look at what I did.
Bet if I was grown all the time will be big.
If I thought back at it
I'm gonna stop with no gig.

-Lil' Quan

From The Beat: You've got a talent for rhyming and flowing. Next step is the organization - try to pick a theme and stick to it, keep coming back to it. The best way to get your views across is to pick the most important ones and focus it.

Next Time

Next time I get out I'm going to stay out for the family 'cause they want me back at home cause they have not seen me in a long time so that's why they want me back home. And for my lady cause she give me some different love that no one can give me.

-Mikey

From The Beat: If being there for your family is what keeps you out of trouble, that's great. Make sure you're also in it for yourself - I'm sure your family's not the only ones who would like you to stay out of the hall.

What You Gon' Do Obama?

Obama on my momma
Obama where's Osama?
Obama the economy is weaker than a llama.
What you gon' do Obama?
It's way too much drama
And you can't go cry to yo' momma.
So what you gon' do Obama?
Please don't fall into any trauma.

-That One Girl

From The Beat: It's funny, the first part of this poem is mostly just riffing on the fun of trying to rhyme with the president's last name, but at the end you really get serious, with a message of the hope that many of us have that this leader will be able to help the country steer its way through danger, and also stay out of danger himself!

Change is Difficult

Everyone is talking about change.

Change is a very difficult thing to do, because it takes a lot of effort to change to and accomplish your own goals. A change it's really in you, a change makes a difference in our world, it makes a safer zone if the change is for good. When I was a kid at the age of 10 I loved cars, I wanted to be a car designer. I used to buy a lot of cars with cool designs. Now I am going to start college classes in here about business.

-Sad Boy

From The Boy: Change is hard, you are so right. But if there's anyone who could change his life to something positive, it's you. What kind of car would you want to design? Do you think more about the body, or the engine? Have you thought of the new technologies people use to design cars now? Have you thought of trying to apprentice at a garage?

Can't Stop I Wish I Could Stop

What it don't do Beat? Guess what?

I can't stop popping pills
I can't stop lurking at night to find a sweet lick.
I can't stop hitting up the block to mess with the homies blowing yay and hop.
I can't stop coming back to the hall lookin at these walls.
I can't stop getting into beef 'cause that is the way I eat.
I can't stop going home to hear my auntie, like...
"why are you high you just like yo brother you gone die and go to hell and fry."

Before I sell myself I'll lose everything
you could lock me up 100 times and get out and do the same thang.

You can't take this street shhhh from me
aint no other game don't get this shhhh confused ninja that's all I bleed.

I only speak on what I done been through and what I'd seen.

I'd rather kill myself before I live a lie before I ever turn informant, ninja,

I rather fry. My mama lost me to the hood I told her that's where I'm gone die.

I told her if she understood real, she'd understood me, she understand why I say screw this mama, these fools hand us lies.

This to all my young ninjas running wild I'm out here witch ya.

-Josh

From The Beat: Sounds like you think you're either true to the streets, or you're a snitch. The truth is that's not the case. You don't have to be at one extreme or the other - that's what moderation is. The idea is to find a way to stop getting yourself into trouble, without getting others in trouble. It is possible, you just have to open your eyes.

I Will...

I will make a change by start hanging out with the right kids that make better choices, and I will start trying harder in school. I will stay home instead of going out with friends when they are gonna make the wrong choices. I will start playing more sports, I will go to college and get a good job.

My dream is to become a professional football player. I would play wide receiver and I would practice everyday. I'm going to get good grades in school so that I can go to college and play football. If I get the chance to play football I would like to play for the San Francisco 49ers.

-Tj

From The Beat: Those are big dreams, but we know that you can make those dreams a reality. What do you have to do to get your goals rolling?

My Own Worst Enemy

Now I understand when people say they're their own worst enemy 'cause whenever I'm about to do good and get off probation I mess up again. I had less than two months left but then I gave in and got another six months added probation and one month locked up.

Then recently after I was doing good seven months clean, I slipped up. Been locked up almost 2 months now waiting on placement and probably gonna be on probation till I'm 18 when I only had three more months till I was off probation.

If it wasn't for my stupid thinking aint none of this would have happened. I don't know why it happens but it seems every time you get close to success something pulls you down. Hopefully this year that will all change.

-Jordyn

From The Beat: You can hope for it, but you can also work for it. Lots of times when we mess our own stuff up it's out of impulse, we didn't think it through. So, a good way to stop this habit is to force ourselves to think everything through before we act. It takes a while to make this a habit, but try it out for a while.

No More Hot Stuff

I want to change my life because being in juvenile hall is not the spirit. Once I get out, I bet I want do no more hot stuff no more and the staff and stuff will never, ever see me back in here in their life.

-Demetre

From The Beat: What will you do, specifically, to stay out of the hall?

I'm Back Again

Damn it I'm back again. I said I wasn't gone come back for a second time but look like I'm back. They talking about letting me out on GPS and I think I need it, that's the sad part. But I'ma pimp it 'cause I through with my friends, they fake and I always get in to bad things when I'm around them, no more. So I aint coming here no more I'ma be in the house with my girlfriend, aka the weez'l, that mean the wifey. Man I love that girl, I can't wait to get out and be with her.

When I with her I don't never think about bad things. It's like she the good side of me, she only wants me to do right and I am just for her. My mom and my sister and brother, that's who gone keep me out of trouble.

-Domie

From The Beat: Having people in your life who care about you support you is so important to you being able to stay out of trouble. Keep these people close, listen to them, and do right by them.

I'm Not A Number

Hey Beat, this yo' girl Banana. I went to court Monday, January 5th, 2009, and not a damn thing happened. I go back Friday, January 9th, 2009. The DA trying to make me a 602 or a 702. I don't care. They just numbers. I know who I am, and I'm not no number

I am Banana. I'm tall and I do not look like no number. I'm trying to go home. I'm about to be 19 May 7th. I don't need to be here at all. I can be playing ball right now. But it cool 'cause USF said I can still play ball and make it to the WNBA.

But yeah, to my hubby, I love you and miss you. And to all here and at the Ranch, keep yo' head up, and keep praying to that good man God. Well that all. Love, Banana.

-Banana

From The Beat: Those numbers don't tell us who you are, Banana, but they can make a difference to your future, so you have to take them seriously. We definitely hope that USF and the WNBA are in your future. But you already know that being a talented basketball player isn't enough to guarantee that. You also have to be a good student. And to do that, you have to be — and stay — free. Don't let anything (including your "hubby") get in the way of that!

Waiting 'Til I'm 18 To Change

What's up with The Beat, mayne? This ya boy Jerry Geez back up in this thang, yamsayin'? I ain't feeling the topic, though.

Last time I was here I was here for the same shhh. I was talking 'bout I wasn't gon come back, and here I am. I'd like to say I'll change, but then I'll just be lying to myself 'cause I know that when I get out, I'ma go back to the block with the homies, and smoke and drink and get into some more trouble.

When I turn 18 though, I'ma fasholy stop, 'cause then things get worse, yamsayin, like things that we getting months for in here we start getting years, and ja know I ain't 'bout to do that.

-Jerry

From The Beat: This is a very dangerous strategy, Jerry, because all kinds of things jump off on the block, even when you don't expect or want them to. How many chances do you think you get? Why would you put off making the changes you know you need to make on the grounds that you're willing to give up weeks and months of your life to the system, but not years? Why would you be willing to give up any time to be under the thumb of strangers telling you what to do? You don't suddenly become mature just because you turn 18. It's time to start thinking like an adult. Otherwise, you might find yourself in that "If only" situation when it's too late to change.

I'm Be Back

Man, I be back to the block one day. They got me down right now, but I'm good. Just waiting for that day that the judge say, "Released." You know when I get back home, I'ma holla at the thugs one time. RIP to the homies. Thug in peace, big bra. We gone meet again bra bra.

Man, I'm just tryna get out and do my thang, talk to my ol' lady. You know how it is out here. It's hard, and I'm out here living it. I gotta eat on these streets and live on these streets, and I'ma die on these streets. I'ma G, but chu know, ninjas is getting' killed out here in '08 and '09.

Man, I seen a lot of shhh on these streets, but I love my streets though

-D-B

From The Beat: It's should be obvious to you by now that nobody matter how much you love these streets, they don't love you. They don't love anyone. They're nothing more than streets without hearts. We're hoping you'll see this in time to respect your own living heart more than the cold, uncaring streets, so that you don't have to answer to strangers telling you what to do, or worse... It's what you do after the judge releases you that we hope you give some serious thought to.

Everyone's Talking Change, Are You?

This yung Dri. What's up with The Beat? Check this out. I'ma change for the better. It's '09. It's time for me to step my game up. I need to do the right thing. I'm getting too old to keep on doing kiddie shhh, so I know it's best for me to change for me and for my family.

-Dri

From The Beat: Good for you. As the Bible says, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, thought like a child, and reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I no longer used childish ways." (1 Corinthians 13:11)

Stuff Like That

I feel like I'm my own worst enemy because people is always on my back, and stuff like that. I have to show them that I'm not a punk, and stuff like that.

-Jb

From The Beat: We wish you would expand on these two sentences by explaining what "stuff like that" means. Why do you have to show "them" you're not a punk, or anything else. You only have to show yourself what you are capable of doing, and forget the rest.

My Worst Enemies

Let me tell you something that I heard last week that has been runnin' through my mind because it so true: "Your three worst enemies are, yourself, money and women"... That quote has been in my head all week. It's had me thinking because those three things, it's what makes people's lives miserable.

"More money, more problems." The more money you get, the more haters; the more issues, the more problems!

Women — all they do is mess with you, make you fall for them and break your heart! Just brings more stress and pain to you.

And then your worst, worst enemy, yourself! You and you only can decide what to do with your life. You could either take the good path or the bad path, make good decisions or bad.

Only you know what's best for you. Always remember. "Your worst enemies: yourself, money and women."

-Yung Chuy

From The Beat: We don't think you (or we) always know what's best for ourselves. Sometimes, what we think is best turns out not to be so. We also don't think women are necessarily your enemy, any more than money is. It's all in how you approach those two topics and how you relate to them in your life. Money is nothing more than a tool, not an end in itself. As for women, some of the greatest human beings in history are women. When you say women are one of the three worst enemies you have, does that include your mother? Think about it.

Day By Day

What's up with The Beat, mane. I'm back in here from being out for eight months, and I'm going through this stuff day by day again. Man, I got trial tomorrow, and I hope it go right for me for real!

But yeah, I'm going with what god put in my way because I'm not the type to just sit and stress about it. I'ma make the best out of whatever I do! But on that note, I'm down for my lil' sis, J-Ray. That's why I'm going through this stuff day by day!

But anyway, that's all I gotta say. Hopefully I get out tomorrow or so, and go back to doing right. So with said, RIP J-Ray. I miss you sis!

-Wink

From The Beat: After eight months, what pushed you off the path you were on? What advice could you give to other, younger boys, who think they can escape the consequences of misbehavior? We hope you find your way back to "doing right" as you say you will.

Stop Crying: A Dialogue

Hey Beat, this yo' girl Banana.

Sis: Stop crying Banana. It's going to be ok.

Banana: I can't stop crying. I miss my fam bam.

Sis: Do they come see you?

Banana: Yes, my god mom, but my big bra can't and neither can my little bra or my twin sister.

Sis: Well, I'm here for you.

Banana: You are not my blood, but it's cool.

Sis: Well, it's cool. We like blood.

Banana: I know I love you like if you was my real sis.

Sis: I love you too. When do you go back to court?

Banana: January 9th 2009. You?

Sis: January 12th 2009.

Banana: That's good. Well I'm sleepy.

Sis: Wake up.

Banana: Ok, I'm up. What do you want?

Sis: Let's go play ball.

Banana: I wish.

Sis: Ha, ha, ha!

Banana: That's not funny.

Sis: Yes it is.

Banana: No it's not.

Sis: Yes it is.

Banana: Bye.

Sis: Where you going?

Banana: Away from you.

Sis: Ok. Bye.

Banana: All right Beat, to be continued... next week.

-Banana/Sis

From The Beat: We wish you two would do a little less playing with your words and a little more serious thinking and teaching. When sisters love each other, they keep each other out of trouble. How do you two plan to keep each other (and yourselves) out of trouble?

Getting Out And Staying Out

What's poppin' with The Beat? Man, this y'all lil' bra Twin. Man, I'm gettin' out in a few days, feel me. So you know, I'ma just do me and stay out of trouble. Man, I'ma just lay low and do my thang, just get a job, get my cheddah, an' start from there.

I'ma just try to get off probation and watch my back, 'cause man, too many snakes out hea'. Can't trust nobody. But yeah, don't let the grass grow too long because it's too many snakes. But yeah, ya lil' bra just gonna lay back an' do his thang.

-Lil' Twin

From The Beat: You can't control the people you describe as "snakes." All you can do is make sure you're not one of them. We hope you follow through on your plan to get off probation and stay away from the things that lead you here, because freedom beats slavery every day of your life!

My Worst Enemy

My worst enemy is all of these fake friends. You think you can trust them, then they stab you in the back or they do something to set you up. They trick you and end up somewhere bad in your life.

I think something should change in life is people always getting into violence. Everybody just needs to stop.

-Tommy

From The Beat: No one can really set you up if you know what's right and wrong, and can say "No" to those who want you to do wrong. Of course, saying "No" takes courage, so we don't know if you have what it takes to do it. But in the end, it's in your hands. (We combined your two topics into one, because we want you to choose just one topic to write more about. If you choose more than one, you really can't write much about them.)

The Year Got Better

2008 was fun and adventurous. I went to parties did other things. But I also had bad times, got jumped, had fights etc. But I went through those obstacles and got through 'em. This year started bad, but then after it start getting good 'cause I met my man.

-Karla

From The Beat: We always worry when good or bad depends on a man... You have to find the strength inside yourself to want to free of the life that leads to places like this, whether there's a man in your life or not. Word to the wise!

2009 Will Be Better Than 2008

What up Beat Within?

I had the hardest year ever. 2008 everything just happened to me. I almost got killed. I got hit by a car. That when I started coming to YGC, and ever since then, I keep coming back.

Only good thing that happened was Obama became the president, so that gone make 2009 great for me.

-Destiny

From The Beat: We don't quite understand why your near-death experience started the pattern of you getting locked up. What's the connection? Anyway, we like your optimism about 2009 and our new President! He's going to change things, so you have to change things, too!

Your Own Worst Enemy

My own worst enemy is me, because when I start smoking and drinking, I do stupid things, like go and rob somebody for the fun of it.

It all started when I turned ten and I was on the block with my homies. Then I seen them smoking, and I asked them if I can smoke. They said I can, and then they passed it to me. Ever since then I been high 24/7 and doing stupid things. That's why, when I get out, I'm going to change and I'm not coming back here, 'cause I been thinking all about how my mom been feeling and how much she been stressin'. So when I get enrolled in school, I'm going to make my mom proud. I love you, momma.

-H. Potter

From The Beat: Does this mean you will stop drinking and smoking? If you don't, you can expect to continue doing stupid things, and continue stressing out your mom. But if you do what you say you want to do — go to school clean and sober — you will make both your momma and you proud of yourself.

I'ma Get It Right

I have sabotaged my life 'cause things were going right for me. We all make mistakes, yeah, it's true. Committing a crime got me in here, and they not tryna let me out. Throwing the book at me, forgetting

about my future — no college, no kids.

It's lookin' all bad

Spending time in the room thinking 'bout dad

Most times we don't know what's the outcome of what we do

So, we don't care what happens as long as we get through

Let me go home and live my life and I bet I'ma get it right

-Ballard

From The Beat: You may be right that "they" are forgetting about your future, but that's easy to do; you were forgetting about your own future when you took the risk that led you here. The best way to look at it is that this is temporary, a time-out along a path that still could lead to college, kids and all that you hope for. You'll have another chance to "get it right," even if that chance doesn't come as fast as you'd like it to.

Lock Down

I'm locked down in this box, but you know how now it goes. Every day, I think about when I'm going home one day, or it might be the next day, or it might be another day. But it's all right.

But when Mix touch down, it's going to be a long night. I'ma do me. To hell with who they want me to be. I'm keep it real. My first love is my streets.

-Mix

From The Beat: In the spirit of keeping it real, if you "do you" in the same way you've been doing you (loving the streets enough to hand away your freedom), then you can count on the system to do the system — meaning, be prepared to be spending a lot more time in the exclusive company of other males, because that is what you are choosing.

Something Positive, Something Negative

If I had the power to change the economy, I would make the juvenile halls better by making sure they have hot water, better food, warmer water, and things like that. I would also make sure there were more jobs for people.

For some reason I felt the need to carry a gun on New Year's Eve. I wish I didn't feel like I needed to, or else I would've been at home laying in my bed right now. That's when I was my own worst enemy.

-Kyle

From The Beat: We're sure the conditions of every jail, including juvenile hall, could be made better. But maybe if we put some more money into the communities, we wouldn't need so many jails to begin with. We won't comment on the gun situation (you already know the consequences of that choice), except to say that The Beat wants you to choose just one topic to write about so that you can give us more details about it.

Skip's Broadcast: Value My Freedom

Man, it's amazing how it take people to lose something to trip and realize how precious that something is. My freedom is something I lost and didn't fully appreciate it. I was out and trippin' like it's beautiful out here, and later that day I was here. I know it's brief, but it's real.

-Skip

From The Beat: Oh yes, so real... Can you tell us how your new appreciation for freedom will affect your actions when you regain it?

Church

Last time I was at church, I wore a Ed Hardy fit. What does matter is not how your dress. It's the praise and love for Jesus. Plus, I found out that the best women are in church. I also took my kid with me. It was memorable.

-Churchman

From The Beat: We're glad you are getting something positive out of going to church. Belief in god and religious teachings can be very powerful tools to keep you free and positive. (Plus, you can meet "the best women.")

I'm Back!!

I'm back on some phony shhh, but they can't hold a ninja down for long. I just been outside of the halls for six months blowin' fat 'dro, beatin' up the streets with ma goons, ya heard me!

I just want to get to the block. To hell with what everybody else talking 'bout... I really want to go home and smack some ninjas on grand theft auto, yamsayin... Ya boy checkin' out.

-Lil' Goo

From The Beat: Is there some connection between "beatin' up the streets" with your "goons," smoking "fat 'dro" and coming back to this place? If so, you better rethink your determination to keep doing what you do, 'cause the system is certainly going to keep doing what it does.

Tryin' To Be More

We gettin' high in the box seats.

You sittin' in ah nose bleed.

Yeah, we laughin' at y'all ninjas, the girlyies came wit' us

Ninjas in here got papa, they tryna get it

We ain't trippin', we tryna live it up

We born hustlas who neva gave up

An' the level of Gs made money in ma sleep

Tryna exit the game but a ninja can't escape

I found myself insane

I'm losing my brain

My mind, where did I go, 'cause I ain't the same

Where did I go wrong? I ask myself but I can't explain

Drug dealer ain't as easy as it seems

I'm just ah ninja true

But to be more is my dream, ya know

-D-Butta

From The Beat: Even though we had to take out some of your lines (self-incriminating), we hope your dream to be more is the focus of your thinking. What "more" do you want to be, and what's the best way to get there without risking your life or your freedom? Finding the answers to those questions can move you farther and farther away from places like this!

Repping My Shhh

Yeah, it's ha boy D-Rolla. I'm holding it down in the max unit in YGC. Man, staff up here be eating all our food and be acting hella sick. Yeah, but ninjas ain't sick up in here, like they be hollerin' on the streets.

Ey, keep ya head up. Y'all can get through this. But man, they tryin' to give ya boy 15 years without an L. But it's cool. I am going to stay repping my shhhh.

-D-Rolla

From The Beat: When will you start repping yourself, and not somebody else's idea of what and who's important? There comes a time when you have to start thinking for yourself, and we hope that time comes soon. We don't think it's cool to give up even a day to a system that can't care about you the way you should be caring for yourself. We hope you don't have to do those years they want to give you.

Real Ninja Every Day!

Bax-Uh-Billion aka Yung Dooda

Real ninja every day-365

And when I talk to you, I don't look off

I look ya in ya eye

Sissy ninja in ya, I'ma get it out cha every time

And I done made it to where you a phony

Ninja, you can't survive

I speak da true for y'all ninjas living lies

I know the streets homie, I don't know the otha side

Street ninjas is the ones who gave me the drive

Real ninja first trap ninja by accident

A street critic and product of my environment

Me being a phony ninja is something that was neva meant

And neva vibe wit phony ninjas, that's common sense

Me being a real ninja is all I done eva been

P.S to The Beat Within:

This needs to make it because these lil' ninjas need to know it don't take the streets to make you "real" lil' homie. "Straight like that!"

-Yung Dooda

From The Beat: We appreciate your efforts to school those younger than you about what it means to be real. The problem is, the definition of "real" changes from person to person. You warn that the "phonies" won't survive, but the reality is that none of us will survive. We are all moving toward the same final end; only the roads we take to get there are different. We have one journey in this world, and it matters whether you are the director of that journey, or whether you hand over direction to others.

I'm Still Me

A ninja tryin' so hard to get his life in order befo' I hit that dirt, but it's hard, 'cause this hot shhh is all I know. I been doin' this shhh fo' too long, so I actually feel that it's normal. But this shhh is old, and cost too much. I ain't worried 'bout doin' time; that ain't too much of a problem. It's the fact that I miss too much when I'm down.

But every time I go down, I learn more. I see shhh different every time. I got a lil' female, an' I'm putting her on to see shhh my way an' how to think 'bout me an' her, like I do, feel me? I told her what I need from her, and how and when I do certain shhh What I really like about her is that she don't ask hella questions an' don't care to know anything illegal. At first I was lookin' at her like she don't care 'bout me, but shhh kept tellin' me she did. Then I seen as if them people come knockin' or I get snitched on, she don't know shhh to tell. She know the life I'm livin', an' she got a baby, so I understand where she comin' from.

That's how most relationships mess up, lack of communication an' lies. I told my female, as long as she keep it real, it shouldn't be no problems. An' fo' real, what's the point of lyin'? If she love you, then it shouldn't matter what she tell you, especially if it's the wife, feel me? The wife should know almost everything most of the time, if you word it right an' wait 'til she ready. Y'all gon' come to an agreement, but then again, you gotta have a good reason. I'ma dip to the next topic.

-Cam

From The Beat: What we can't understand, Cam, is why you would risk losing a relationship with a female like this by doing the things she doesn't want to know about? After time, why should she stay with you when you have left her behind? You're right that relationships that work are based on honesty and trust, but no relationship can for long when those in it are separated. Does her love make you want to change some of how you live on the outs? If so, in what ways? If not, what do you expect will happen? As for doing time not being much of a problem, once you hit state prison — which we hope you never do — you'll find it becomes a real problem real fast!

A Recommendation To The President

With a billion dollars, I think the President should build a place for kids where they get to do activities and keep them out of the streets. Also, I think he should help the homeless with shelter.

-Billion Dollar Idea

From The Beat: We think these are good suggestions, and hope the President takes them seriously.

Missing Her

I miss my girl
She miss me, too
Every day I think of you
Hope to god that I stay with you

-Lejhaun

From The Beat: You've got to do more than just "hope to god." You've got to do things differently. Is that your plan?

We Are Not Animals

I think they need to let me out and stop messing with me while I'm on the streets. I don't think they should lock nobody up. We are not animals. Animals should be the only thing that need to be locked up.

-Acie

From The Beat: You say the system should stop messing with you when you're on the streets. But the system says you should stop messing with others when you're on the streets. What's the difference between you?

Locked Up During Holidays

These past couple of weeks consisted of Christmas and New Years. If you were locked down for these holidays, it was hard for most. We all wish we were out with family. Even though you were locked down, you should keep ya head up, 'cause some day you will get out. And when that day comes, you will be free. If you keep ya head up, you will be free in your head.

-C-Rider

From The Beat: And if you are really free in your head, you will be able to figure out a way to stay free in your body, when that time comes again.

Can't Hold Us Forever

Man, what's good with The Beat? They still got ya boy D-Boom in this thang. Shhh, phony fa real, 'cause they ain't tryin' to let me up out this thang.

But it's good 'cause they can't hold ya boy down forever, ya dig. We all gon touch down one day.

To all my goons and young thug thugs, one love.

-D-B

From The Beat: Okay, so you're going to touch down one day. And then what? Unless you have a good answer to that question, you aren't using your time, you're letting it use you.

Man, Change

Yeah, this ha boy D-B. Man, change. I mean, yeah, everybody need a change 'cause I'm sho everybody need to change. Brothers sick of being in here.

Me? This is the last time I'ma be in here. Next stop is the pen fo' me. So I need to stop slippin' and stop getting' wrapped, ya dig. Right now I'm away from my family, my goons. And most of all, my wifey. Really love her to death.

-D-B

From The Beat: We hope your love for your woman will allow you to make the changes you know you have to make if you want a life with her — and not a life surrounded only by other males!

Everyone's Talking Change, Are You?

Hell no! I hear everyone around me say that they going to change their lives. That's cool. But me? No. The only change that I'm going to make is to get out of the system. But once I get out of my group home, I'm going back to what I do best. This is my sixth time being locked and this is my first time writing to The Beat.

-Woodie

From The Beat: Well, if what you do best has led you to lock-up six times, then you better find something else you're truly good at. That change you promise — to get out of the system — won't last long if you go back to doing "what you do best."

Same Ol' Shhh!

What's s'up with The Beat? This yo' boy, Tizzle, down here at the Ranch. But, yeah, I ain't got that long to be up here. Man, it's just takin' forever for me to get up out of here. I'm just go' sit back an' do this time. It's nothing. I been doing time. But, yeah, I don't got that much to say. I'm gone.

-Tizzle

From The Beat: As long as doing time is "nothing," then you'll do nothing to change what leads to places like this. When does time become something? After a week? A month? A year? A lifetime? Think long and hard about this, because time is all we have, and when it's gone, it's gone forever!

Going To Keep Out Of Trouble

This is ya boy, God Ali, posted on this thang for 38 days, on my way to a grouper. About to do my thang, finish it, go to school, get a job, stack my dough. About to get out back to the block, keep out of trouble.

-God Ali

From The Beat: How are you going stay out of trouble back on the block? Finish school. That should be your one and only goal until you achieve it!

Your Own Worst Enemy

I was my own worst enemy when I picked up the "thang". I started getting in trouble. I thank God I didn't get caught up, but I know what I did. I started messin' up at the schoolhouse. I messed up my attendance and my juvie record, startin' to get phat. When I decided to get my shhh together, I got in my own way by bein' with the shhh... on a hot one. I'm my own worst enemy.

-T-Ras

From The Beat: Okay, you list lots of examples of how you have sabotaged yourself. But why? And even more important, how do you plan to change this pattern so that you can become your own best friend?

I Ain't Changing, For Real!

What's good with The Beat? Man, to keep it really real, I ain't changin' nothin' about me, for real. Man, right now I don't care about nothin' but my thugs and my family. And when I leave this Ranch, I'ma get out and do the same thing. These white people can't hold me down foreva, ya dig? It's a new year and I'm makin' shhh hurt. I'm out.

-Cb

From The Beat: Can you really care about your family when you're so willing to keep doing the things that you know lead to being taken from your family, leaving them in tears? Just saying that you care about your family doesn't convince us that it's true. Caring for someone or something requires far more than words. As for the childish belief that "white people can't hold you down forever," try telling that to the more than 200 children (under 18) serving life-without-parole sentences in this state alone. Each one believed "they" couldn't be held down forever, and each one will never again see the light of day.

Jail Doesn't Matter To Me

What's up with The Beat? I'm here writing again, but I still locked up in la Juvenile. But I ain't tripping. It's cool. I'm writing about mi caso (my case) 'cause the jura (cops) tryin' to give 25 to life for some shhh I didn't do. But you know, la jura always tryna play you porque eres pandillero (because you're in a gang).

But I don't trip to be here in that carcel (jail). Me preocupo (I'm only worried) about mi jefita (my girl). But you know what's up with the gang bangers. No les importa estar aqui (it doesn't matter to them to be here). But I care about mi jefita.

Damn, I worried about my baby mama. She is embarazada tiena 3 months (three months pregnant). But it's cool. I hope I'ma be out when mi morrito nazca (my baby is born). That's all I want to.

I be here for long time so I'm going to write again. Al rato les vuelvo a escribir. (Okay, I'll write again.) This vato is out. Alrato!

-Duende

From The Beat: The longer you live as a prisoner, the more important freedom will become to you. When you finally see that giving your life away to a system that doesn't care about you isn't cool, then and only then will be you begin to see the difference between being a man and being a child. We only wish you had seen it before you brought yet another life into this world when you couldn't even take care of the one you had... your own!

My Baby Girl

Ah, Beat, it's Lil' Unlucky. Yeah, that's right, I failed placement. I'm back in the halls, missing my baby girl like crazy. Just want to hold her tight. I swear I'll never let her go again. That's fo' reals. I told this girl I love her, which I haven't said and meant in a long time, but it's too bad. I fell for her while they had yo' boy on the run. But like Huss said, "I'm on the run, havin' fun, but I know I'll feel the pain soon." And, yes, I'm feelin' the pain now on my way to Sac Town for my third placement.

The judge say it's my last chance to knock out my year of time or they gon' send my ass outta state, so I gotta do what I gotta do. I'm hoping my girl gon' stay strong while her "real ninja's" gone. I'ma miss her mucho, but it's time to handle my shhh. I took her to jail twice since we started messin' around, and she locked me up accidentally, too, and she gon' save my life by this. I love her with all my heart. She gon' be my "Ride or Die" and I'ma be her "real ninja" 'til the man up above says otherwise.

All readin' this shhh, you obviously got a girl that you thinkin' about, so hold on tight, 'cause you don't know what you got 'til it's gone. Much love an' respect. Stay up an' take care of yo' shhh. Stay up. 'Til next time.

-Lil' Unlucky

From The Beat: "They" didn't have you on the run; you had yourself on the run, so you should have been prepared for the consequences. You're feeling the pain of your own actions, but so are a lot of other people feeling that pain, like your girl, your mom, your loved ones. If you want to be the man in her life, it's time to handle things like a man. Sometimes, to be an adult means doing what we don't want to do today so that we can do what we want to do tomorrow.

A Cappella

I don't do The Beat, man, so I'm go a cappella with this shhh. Well, let me tell you why.

These ninjas don't neva put my shhh in The Beat. But anyways, take it like how I'ma tell you, "Damn my PO. I ain't gone stop grindin'. Violate me if you want. Gone have to find me. You could find me on the block to alley grindin', like every goddamn day, like a Friday.

-Chop

From The Beat: You can keep grinding all you want. But when you open your eyes, maybe you'll realize that it's your PO who is in a position to damn you, and not the other way around. You've been here long enough to know this; if you choose to ignore it, then you choose to accept the consequences you're now experiencing.

Everyone Talking Change

Most people who pop that "change" word be lyin'. It just sound good. People just like saying, "change," because most people want to hear theyselves speak. When a person say, "It 2009, time for a change," they just want to act like they trying to act like they was sent from heaven. But in reality, they be talking out the side of the neck, like these "boys" out here.

I hate when people use Obama making President as a sign that anything can happen. It's not true. So, to anybody who saying, "Change is coming," shut up with all the talking and show me some change.

-Shotty G

From The Beat: Forget about all the others saying they're going to change (whether they're fronting or not), and focus on yourself. It's true that Obama's election does not mean "anything can happen," but for anyone old enough to remember "Colored Only" and all that those words stood for, it proves that change is possible. If you are saying that you have no plans to change yourself, that's a choice you make. But don't ever doubt that others are capable of change if they choose to make it. So don't tell us about "people." Tell us about you. What will you choose?

You Say We Free

You say we free
 Then why you stuck in one area
 Can't go outside your boundaries 'cause
 Ninjas wanna bury you
 For reasons uncertain
 Young ninjas dying so rapidly now
 It's like, "Damn! We lost him too!"
 And you say we free
 Talking about you got freedom of speech
 Staying in one part of town can't expand your brain
 The sky impossible to reach
 That hopeless feelin',
 Thinkin' the only thing you can do right is sleep
 And you say we free
 Trapped in a concrete jungle
 Where everybody wants to be a lion
 Feelin' there's no sense in climbin' to the top
 Because ninjas on the streets are like crabs in a bucket
 Always pullin' you down
 And you say we free
 Then why we cheat our brains
 It's hard to be creative with the cells that remain
 Minds trapped in chains inside a cage
 Screamin' for freedom
 But blunt smoke and alcohol are the only things you fee
 'em
 (Talkin' 'bout food for thought)
 And you say we free
 Livin' on the edge waitin' to get pushed
 Black on black crime is reaching an all-time high in the
 record books
 It's hard to focus on the path ahead
 When you always have to give your shoulder an overload
 And you say we free
 Lack of self motivation keepin' ninjas in altercation
 Lack of destination leads to no demonstration for our
 youth
 So they entertainment is the only thing you can do
 And if we free
 Why we livin' with no sense of reality
 Young ninjas dyin' fast 'cause they want respect
 Like, "Your majesty"
 And you say we free
 But in all actuality, we sill livin' in slavery
 Minus the visual chains
 Now, society holds us captive with visuals to the brain
 It's a shame how jingles make people go insane
 Dismantle their game
 And you tellin me we free
 Most people speak love for each other
 Will have the shackles off our feet
 Now ask yourself...
 Are you free???

-D-Boii, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a first-class demonstration of the deep thinking you are capable of, and with deep thinking can come a kind of freedom (though, in truth, none of us is truly free from our upbringing, our conditioning, our circumstances). But this poem shows that one can begin to free himself, to remove the shackles from the mind that keep us imprisoned. If society is holding you captive, what can you do to break the chains they've put on your brain? And what can you do to lead others out of slavery?

Put Money In My Community

I would put in my community a lot of business an' money in stores like clothes store. I would put in a lot of repairs for my 'hood an' street. I would put a lot of money into my lil' homies' programs, too, like sports, like football and basketball.

-DB

From The Beat: These are good suggestions. (We couldn't read your first name, so we used your initials. Take a little more time when you write so we can read it...)

My Block

Shhh, on ma block I see a ninja drop almost every day...
 A ninja got to jail every day...
 Shhh, that's all a ninja know
 So why not get with the shhh, feel me
 Forget the police... and the Bart police

-Lil' Goo

From The Beat: The answer to your question ("why not get with the shhh") is so simple: because it leads to the kind of slavery you're experiencing right now... or worse.

Making Them Think I'm A Nerd

Chea, mayne. You know this ya boy, Yung Spunks. You know, man, I'm on that low. I blow mo' dro fo' tro' and pop pills and get drunk so I could lose my brain cells so the homies won't know how smart I really am. I pretend I'm dumb because I want to hide my true identity, because I think they will think I'm a nerd. I'm going to keep intelligence on the down low, and keep playin' with the homies, and I'm going to use my book smarts combined with my street smarts. I'm smart in math—algebra, geometry, science, and language arts.
 Math=Counting money
 Algebra=the percentage of chances
 Science=making crack—pee cleaning, so I know how
 Language Arts=I'm going to use my talking skills to persuade the police

-Yung Spunks

From The Beat: You may really be as smart as you say you are, but the examples you give for how you plan to use your intelligence don't sound very smart to us. All we can tell you is that California prisons are filled and overflowing with people who believed that they were smarter than the system, and could use that to escape the consequences of their actions. Not too smart at all!

Two Can't Be One

I would think I'm two, 'cause I'm twice as big as my age. I would try to do something twice as bigger than someone else. I never tried to think I'm twice as smarter than someone. Me, I think dumb around people, just to show off, but now I regret everything. I wish I can get another chance.

-Tommy Gunn

From The Beat: If you get that other chance, what will you do that's different from before you got here? Regretting things is only useful if it keeps you from doing them again.

Your Worst Enemy

An example of me being my worst enemy is when I peer pressure myself into ding things I knew wasn't right. Examples: cutting school, smoking marijuana, committing crimes, etc.

-Sebron

From The Beat: What do you mean by peer pressuring yourself? We can understand being peer pressured by others (not having the courage to say "No" to homies), but how do you peer pressure yourself? Any changes in your future?

In My Cell

Sitting in my cell
Late last night whipping
These tears that falling
From my eye hoping that
Tonight goes by fast for
I don't have to be thinking
About the past cause
It hurts to bad then
I start to get bad knowing
The fact that you were a mack
And I still took you back

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: You have a choice. Make good choices and you won't have to rethink them or regret them.

Chillin'

What's up Beat. It's this crazy white girl up in here chillin'. Wish I wasn't, but yeah, I don't really have a choice. Got court soon. Hope mom wants me home, but if not, I go home in March. No probation 'cause I'll be done with everything - all my max time - so it's good.

But yeah, I miss everyone a lot, and I hope you guys doing hard time keep your heads held high and don't let anyone get you down. Don't lose hope and stay off that dope.

-Jazz

From The Beat: Next time you're tempted, try to remember how much you miss the ones you love. Ask yourself if you want to go through all this, and maybe worse, again.

Late At Night

Sitting in my cell late last night couldn't seem to sleep or even close my eyes thinking 'bout the outs and doin' my thing livin' life like a nusalun. The best you've seen living on the grind so you know I'm makin' mines. Love to make money because the life without it man it ain't funny. I thought you knew I'm a rebe. Try to get like me - you ain't on my level.

Damn, I wish I was out. I ain't no baby so you know I won't pout. Gotta get my sleep but my eyes are fighting.

Gotta stay awake my bodies decided, so I might as well use this time right because I know I'll be up all damn night.

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: Insomnia is a tough one. By the way - what's a nusalun?

To Forgive?

Well before I got locked up, it was me, my mom, a guy, and his girl. I met them through my man. Me and that girl got along and we kept it real with each other until I got locked up. I had my stuff at her mom's house until I could take it to my best friend's house. The night we got locked up she told me to keep my head up and that she loved me. Now she's out pretending she don't know me and saying that all my stuff is gone. That's hella messed up. I trusted her and thought she was a real home girl. Well I was wrong. You got to forgive and forget but it's hard when people do you hella shady like that.

Honestly - I don't think I will forgive her, but she'll get something in return for what she did.

-Lauren

From The Beat: Strange story L. We're sorry it worked out like this. But let it go. You have larger, more important things to think about. You have to rebuild your life. You can always get more things.

Then, Now, And In The Future

Sitting in my room late at night, all that goes through my mind is my man and what he is gonna be doing when he's out there without me. And now that he is out, should I get out and be with him, or just go to the program.

I want to do good, but it's hard when your man's out and you ain't. And I just think about all the things I did wrong and what I can do better. I know you shouldn't dwell on the past but it's hard to forget. I just think about my life - now, then, and in the future.

-Lauren

From The Beat: It's good to think about things, but not to obsess on them. Be preparing a plan, a written plan that you can refer to when you get out. Cover things like - your goals, and specific steps for achieving them. List the probable temptations that will pop up from time to time. Make a list of how you'll meet those temptations. Make a full blown plan, and stick with it. Good luck Lauren.

Give It All Up

Before I got locked up the lifestyle I lived was crazy. It got me down at times, but it was the addictions and temptations that kept me going.

Since I been locked up I kept telling myself I'm gonna stay doing good. But it's hard.

Lately now I've been doubting myself. I've been talking to my therapist about what I want to do when I get to the ranch.

I feel like I got a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other. One is telling me to run. The other is telling me to keep it together and keep doing good. I'm getting frustrated because it sounds like I should take the easy way out. At the same time all I'm going back to is the same shhh.

I want a better future and don't know how to get there. What to do - I don't know? I have a lot more to say about this topic but it will take too long. That's all for now.

-Victoria

From The Beat: Keep writing about it. Writing, in a very real way, is like having a conversation with yourself. And you don't have to remember what you said, because you've written it all down. You already know what you need to do. It's normal to be afraid, and confused, too. Keep writing. Keep talking with your therapist. You'll work it out.

I Wouldn't Give It Up

I don't think I would change my life.

You know I live my life the way I do because that's the way I am.

I would do better though.

I've done things like drugs and stealing,

but I live my life my way and I don't think I'm willing to stop gang banging.

I just won't be dumb and do drugs and steal.

Oh and I will also start going to school.

It's not that I fear giving it up.

It's that I don't want to because they are my family

- because my family is all messed up.

The only thing different I would gain is a different appearance to cops.

I wouldn't gain a better education in life, or nothing, because even though I gang bang, I still got all that stuff. So I would change, but not completely.

-Chelsea

From The Beat: Chelsea - you sound a bit confused. We get the feeling you know you need to change, but that you're afraid to take up the challenge. And we understand that it's difficult to change without the support of your family. But if you don't begin to change your ways, you won't get to see your family anyway. You'll be locked up. So be brave. Make the commitment you know you need to make.

That's Really Not Me

I'm nice but that's really not me. I hope that you never goin' to see people fight. They don't war like me. I'm the last of my kind. There's no more like me trying to make it on the street. It's like swimming through the sea, trying to make it to the other side of my young life. People say he tired of life and now realize he's addicted to the white. Got sucked up by the way - trying to make things right - right, he said.

It's raining outside and the difference between us is a white bus with cages inside. When I come home - still face the cop cars with gauges inside. Yo on the real. It's yo rap is what kept me alive. He said - how could I change? I don't know stuff. War on the streets. People tripping over old stuff. Mess it. Make coke flip. I'm a drug dealer, but my father is a cold pimp. It look good but ain't cool, like cold shrimp, back in the bay. Allah who? Akbar didn't understand. He didn't force it on me, and my closest homie. I'm in a life of crime. Allah is always on my mind. All the filth, all the crime - I see straight through it. There's the hood. Let's scrape through it. Gotta be a real person just to make music. Where I'm from, selling stuff is cool, but rap is on my mind. It's hard to do them both and get my bread at the same time.

-Young Paul

From The Beat: Paul - we apologize for having to cut out some of your piece, but The Beat is no place for X-rated material. You are a talented fellow, and we hope you continue to write. You can't be selling and writing. Sooner or later - probably sooner, you'll end up back in here. You need to be in school. You have a good mind. Talk with your PO. Talk with a counselor. If you need help on the outs, they can find it for you. It's always hard to sort the facts from the fictions in pieces like this. We're not sure if you have a substance abuse problem, or if that's just one of your richly created characters. But if you need help, please ask for it. We look forward to more words from you. And by the way - who is 'the real' you? Who are you, really? That's the 64 dollar question each of us asks.

I Wish...

I wish I could go back to the night that I started the fires and not have started them. If I didn't start those fires I wouldn't be here, I would be at home with my mom and brother. I made a stupid decision that night and started fires then in the morning they caught me and my co-part and held us for like five hours, then they brought us here to the hall.

-Matthew

From The Beat: Sometimes we do things that we know is wrong but we do it anyways because we aren't thinking it out thoroughly. These decisions are usually made in haste and the ending result sucks because you've either gotten in trouble or you've hurt someone. But when something like this happens then you pick yourself up and you learn from what you did and if you don't then you are bound to repeat what you've done. Have you learned from your past mistakes or do you think you're bound to repeat?

My New Year's Resolución

To be better to my mom, she is the best and I'm so mean to her. She does everything for me and I treat her like shhhh!

My sisters too. I am so mean to them, I yell at them and all that.

And I want to stay clean off that shhhh, ya dig? That stuff messes you up and when I get out I am going to do better.

I want more in life then being in the hall.

Much love to all you out there I got to go, bye Beat.

-Dd

From The Beat: These are great resolutions! We hope that you can keep these resolutions, too many times have we forgotten about these New Year resolutions because we put them on the back burner for more immediate plans.

Jail's Okay

How I feel to be in jail? It is ok you just watch your back because kids might not like you because you look at them. Worse "watch" what you say to them because you can get jumped.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Teens can be real cruel sometimes, why do you think that is? What do you think you can do to socialize without the other kids thinking that you are looking at them wrong or trying to fight?

My Conversation With God

Forgive me lord for I have sinned.

I've stolen, lied, manipulated, and caused people pain, both physical and emotional pain.

My life was full of ups and downs, highs and lows,

I've done stuff I am not proud of and stuff I am proud of. People put time and effort to help me turn my life around

but I still chose to live the life style of a soldier.

I deserve to be in Hell for my sins.

But I am asking you to let me in,

to be something that I've never been.

But I'm a soldier and I'll do it all again.

- Soldier

From The Beat: Wow, Soldier, this was a powerful piece. We however do not think that you are going to Hell because everyone makes mistakes, whether we want to admit it or not. You are wrong about one thing, there are people who haven't given up on you. We believe that you can change your life around and we know that a lot of other people out there feel the same way you just have to want to change your life around.

Not Gonna Let You Down

Hey Beat, what's up with it? I just thought I would drop a few lines. Well Beat, I'm hella irritated because of four reasons. First, I'm going back to the ranch.

Second, because of these females, I mean, I got my girls and all but one's leaving soon and my other girls just don't understand me.

Third, because during morning shift we haven't had any regular staff and they don't know what the hell they're doing, and fourth, because I went on my OT and I didn't want to come back here but I still did, because I didn't want to let my loved ones down.

Well, I'm out for now! Much respect.

-Tatiana

From The Beat: Sometimes we don't think that our friends will understand how we feel just because we might not trust them with such intimate details about our lives but it doesn't hurt to try and speak with them, Tatiana. We know that it's hard to find a real confidante but remember that you'll always find one with us and you never know, the other girls might understand you more than you think.

My Own Worst Enemy

Q-Onda, Beat? It's Kollmero, chillin' in the max. Well, the topic today is your own Worst enemy. I was at James Ranch For a few months and I only had some months left so that I could get released but that program was not for me because they wanted me to talk with my rivals and to stop gang banging.

Now I got sentenced to Nevada ROP. for 18 months. I'm going to try and do that program 'cause I been locked up for a cool little minute and I'm getting tired.

- Kollmero

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes us a while to realize, "This is not the life for me." But it's never too late to say that! You have to work hard if this is what you really want because if you don't then it'll be even harder to stay on track. We have faith in you, and we know that you can do it, if you want to.

I Am Inferior

I got court tomorrow; I hope I don't get too many years. The D.A. wants me to do 15, but 10 sounds more fair to me. I think if they could, they would put me away for life. I deserve my time though; I am nothing but a gang banging menace to society, que no.

I am emotionless, a creature unable to comprehend the difference between right and wrong. I belong chained and handcuffed behind walls and steel doors.

After all, I am inferior to you because of my choices in life, because at my age of 17, I am supposed to have it all figured out, so I deserve to be tried as an adult.

-Geko

From The Beat: You're wrong, you are not inferior to anyone. Not us and not to anyone. You are not emotionless because we can see your dignity and pain in this piece, we can see how hurt you are to feel as if you're inferior to the world. At your age, you are not supposed to have "it all figured out" and anyone who says otherwise is wrong. You don't have to gangbang and you don't have to be a menace to society, because everything depends on your choices. We know how much potential you have; you just have to know this yourself. Instead of feeling like a menace to the world, make yourself apart of this society. We know the value that you carry and you should know this also! Start today in improving your life!

Ghetto Love... Why?

I've been thinking about you a lot lately,

Just us two planning to have a baby!

With me in your arms,

You by my side just holding me tight.

Damn, let me tell you

Everything felt just right...

But do you care about the choice that was made?

Or even think about your silly mistakes?

I think of what life has to offer

With you and me being together,

Because you want one thing

But then you go chase after the other!!

I'm falling in love with you!

But tell me why?

Why is it so hard for you to just be faithful and stay true?

-Tenesha

From The Beat: This is a great poem, Tenesha, and we know that the women reading this will agree! We all go through these periods of love lost or mistaken love and to put it bluntly, it sucks! Do you have any words of advice to the other gals and guys out there who are dealing with their own relationship problems?

Say No To Strikes

Q-vole, Beat? This is the homie, Lil' Casper, just chillin' in the max unit. Well, today I'm not feeling this topic so I'm going to write about my court.

I went to court today, I been here for a month and a half and I hate going to court because they just keep on giving you more and more court dates. I want to get sentenced already but I know that's going to take more than three months because I'm not going to take the strike that they want to give me. I don't care if I have to be stuck in here for years, I'm not going to take it.

My PO recommends the Ranch, so hopefully I get sent to the Ranch without the strike. I know that in a year or two I'll be at the county jail ready to go to the pen and facing big time because that's just the life.

-Lil' Casper

From The Beat: The strike deal aren't even logical! The Three Strikes Law is probably the most ridiculous law ever invented and we don't think that it will help anyone reform but what can we do? What do you think we can do to try and change that law? We're ecstatic that you are sticking to your instincts and not taking the strike! Sometimes going with your gut is necessary.

Always Running

Hey Beat, what's up? Well, today I wasn't feeling the topic. I'm here in the max Unit and I've been sitting in my room a lot and I've been thinking about why I'm always running away from my problems.

It's just that every time I'm about to do my program, I always feel tempted and end up running but I'm already 18 and I will be out on Feb. 16th - hopefully. I won't continue to do wrong 'cause I won't be coming back here. So that's all for now. To all doing time stay up and don't let nothing get you down.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: We understand the temptation to run when you're somewhere you didn't choose to be but you have to stick it out! If you keep running and running and if you keep getting caught each time then that will just make your incarceration last longer and longer. Getting this over with now mean that you won't have to deal with it later!

The Role Model

I have been here since the 19th of November and I still am here I hope I get out but they want to send me to the boy's ranch. I have a little baby sister that I love so much but I can't see her because I am in here, she cries for me every night.

My mom says my sister is only three years old but I am like her dad because her dad always gets locked up. I remember when she was little I told her I would let nothing happen to her but I can't promise her that because I am in here. I also have a little brother who wants to be just like me but I don't want him to come in here but I can't tell him that because I am in here. But that's all I have to say.

-Carlos

From The Beat: You're wrong, Carlos, because you can tell your brother and sister these things! Write to them, Carlos!! We know that they would appreciate a letter from you and your mother could help your younger bro' and sis' write you a letter back. We can see that you care a lot for your younger siblings and if you want to protect them and help them do good in life then you have to start with your own life. Your brother and sister will look up to you for answers and it's up to you to give them the right answers.

Stealing From Mom

I'm talking today about stealing. I remember when I stole \$20 from my mom to buy Pokemon cards and my mom figured out that it was me and I got my ass beat from my mom. I will never steal from my mom again.

-Ruben

From The Beat: You will never steal from your mom again, right? What about from everyone else? What would you have done differently if you had the choice to go back and do things differently?

Your Own Worst Enemy

My worst enemy was when I stole some money from one of my close family members and I got beat down for the mistake I did. I would never like to experience that moment ever again but I would like to spend all that money on weed again, that was why I stole it because I wanted weed. When I was done smoking all the weed I felt sad and angry at myself because I know I could've done better but now I know that weed isn't that important.

-They Mysterious White One

From The Beat: There are times in our life that we will hurt the people we love because of something crazy like a bike or drugs or clothes. If you'd really like to make amends then tell that person what you did and pay that person back by your actions! We can see how badly you felt about stealing from your relative but let them know this and let them know that you've changed. Show them!

Change

Well let me start this off by showing my utmost Respect to The Beat and Beat readers. Well, the main thing that needs to change in my life would be DRUG USE. I just recently came back.

I failed from my drug Rehab. I didn't relapse or turn in a dirty test I got kicked out for having a relationship. It was a co-ed facility. Crazy, huh? I know. I swear to God when you take Drugs away from those females, it was like they were in heat. Well, I'll Be out soon.

-Chino

From The Beat: How do you feel about getting kicked out for having a relationship, Chino? If you could turn back time would you have waited to begin a relationship? What would you have done differently if you could?

Missin' My Boys

Hey Beat, what up with it? I've been in here for about a month in a half and I'm tired of this place. I got two little boys back home that I haven't seen for almost four months.

I had court last week and I have to go to the Ranch soon. I want to get my shhh straight because I love my two little boys and I want to be there for them. Well, talk to you soon, Beat, later!

-Taz

From The Beat : It is so hard to be away from your children, and we know that there are many people who can understand how you're feeling. When a woman has a child her whole world completely changes, everything revolves around that child. We hope that everything goes well for you and all of the other mothers and fathers out there who are incarcerated. Do you have any words of advice for the other mothers and fathers locked up who are waiting to see their children?

We Missed The Beat

What's up, Beat? Well hey Beat, as you know it's your girl Esmeralda. Well, how are all of you doing? Well, hopefully you're doing good anyways as for me I'm doing cool well today is the 8th of January and I had court and I'm going back for trial in mid-February.

Damn, hopefully I win 'cause I really want to go home. Well anyways Beat, we all missed you and we're glad you're back. Well anyways, I'm gonna go for now much love and respect to all that know me and doing time.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: We're doing great on this end, Esmeralda, thank you so much for asking! Thank you for showing your appreciation for us, it makes doing this all the more worthwhile. We're all wishing you good luck on your trial!

Gone

Cisco Kid was a friend of mine, until he got shot and died. Why did he have to go out that night? He never hurt anyone, just a young homeboy, 17 years old that liked to still have fun.

His mom cried and yelled at me and told me it was my fault when I told him that some people shot him with a gun. Damn, that was her baby, her youngest son.

Cisco, I'll see you one day behind the moon, the stars, and the sun. Until that day comes, I pray for your family and you.

-Young Bro

From The Beat: Sometimes the choices we make determine the outcome of our lives. His mother was hurt and in pain and in her pain she decided to blame his death on you. Her pain did not give her the right to say such a thing but sometimes we say things that we don't mean when our emotions are running wild. Have you tried speaking with Cisco's mother since his death? Maybe talking about it will help you overcome your loss and her loss. When someone close dies, you cannot bring them back but you can keep their memory alive.

Why I Live

I live for loyalty, honor, and respect. The only reason I am alive is because of my love and pride. I will always be my mother's pride and joy.

-Sonny Boy

From The Beat: What do you think defines love, honor and respect? How does your love and pride keep you alive each day?

Stay Up

Hey! Well Beat, I've been in here for a while now and guess what? I'm getting out in about one week, this is the last time me writing in The Beat. It is also my last time in juvenile hall, I'm going to do my best to stay out of here wish me luck.

Well, I just want to say to the ones that are still in here stay up, I know sometimes the staff are hard headed but don't let that faze you, it ain't worth talking back and being on C or B level because time will go by slow so stay on A. All right then, well stay up, much love and respect.

-Criselda

From The Beat: Doing your best legitly is all it really takes to stay out. You just have to do your best and try hard to keep your goals in mind and stay on track.

Just Chillin'

I ain't really feelin' the topics today so I'ma just free-write.

Well, I been here for 5 months, got 5 more to go. I got sentenced last month to 180 days, Life skills. I been waitin' in this Max Unit to get transferred to another unit for a month already. Kind of excited to go so I can be in another environment, I heard it was cool there anyways. I'm gonna try and get a job over there when I get my O.T.'s.

That's what I'm lookin' forward to most. Just takin' it day by day...and until then, I'll be chillin'.

-Dave

From The Beat: We're so happy to see your optimism, Dave! Keeping a positive outlook and an optimistic approach is the first step to pulling yourself out of the system.

When I Grow Up

Well, when I grow up, I want to move back to New York with my grandma after high school, to go to school to be a cosmetologist, own my own Salon, make my own money and help my grandma not have to depend on no one but myself. That's what I want in the future.

-A

From The Beat: You have great goals for yourself, A! What are you going to do to make sure that your plan works out?

Quitting Drugs

Well Beat, these topics are not to my liking, so I'm gonna talk about getting out. I'll be getting out in a few days or less. When I get out, I'm gonna quit my old habits. I'm gonna quit doing drugs, especially the PCP. My drug addiction is what got me in here, so to stay out I have to give it up and I will.

-Flaco

From The Beat: Congratulations on kicking the habit, Flaco! That is so strong of you to do! Kicking a habit, especially a drug habit, is no easy feat and we're rooting for you all the way. You should keep us updated on what you're doing to stay clean because we know that other teens (and adults) could use some advice. PCP is a very strong and dangerous drug. Be aware of the things you are missing with.

Make A Change

What's up Beat? This yo' girl. A way he (Obama) can help out the community is by giving others some better jobs and better rights. I say this because both of these issues are what I want to be done.

One way I know will help the community is by making marijuana legal. By doing this it will help the community from ending up locked up, also, by legalizing marijuana it will give others jobs and better jobs to research and it will help the government too in a way that it helps the economy. Some citizens don't have chances like others in getting a job so they sell in order to have money.

I'm just saying don't let a chance pass by that can be good for both community and government. Keep putting over \$30,000 dollars in prisons and less than \$10,000 dollars in schools or make a good change.

Well, this is my point of view. With you, Obama, being elected you made a change in history now you can to for society. OBAMA!!!! The change is in you.

-Adriana

From The Beat: We understand where you are going with your ideas, Adriana, but would you elaborate for us? If marijuana should be legal to sell then what age limit do you think is appropriate for the distribution of it? If you added more details to your ideas then you could possibly try and get them passed as laws! Wouldn't that be an awesome accomplishment?

Cry When You Have Time!

Well, the thing that gets me irritated is when girls start crying when they only gonna be here for a day or two. Come on now, what kinda shhh is that? Shhh, you did what you did to get in here then you gonna start to cry? Damn that's hella weak, you only gonna be here for a couple of days. Start to cry when you actually get time!

-M

From The Beat: We understand why you would be irritated, M, but sometimes it's hard for some people to control their emotions. When you're in a situation that you can't control then it's frustrating and sometimes our only release is to cry. Emotions aren't a bad thing and we should be made to feel ashamed of them because it's natural, it comes with being human. Instead of becoming irritated with these girls, what could you say to make them feel better? It's not fair to deny others of their emotions/feelings!

Change!

Everyone talks about change. Most people talk about it and don't be about it. I'm one of those people who be about it.

When I get out, I'm gonna better myself and my family and my community so it could be safe for my people to walk around and not try, yadada I mean?

-Giovanni

From The Beat: We are so thrilled to see your determination in changing your ways! You're going to need strong determination and a very strong will to go through with this because your friends might try to tease you for changing but you have to stick with your goals!

The Love I Had For You

The love I had for you was so beautiful,
The love I had for you was so kind,
The love I had for you was so sweet,
The love I had for you was so cute,
The love I had for you was so real,
The love I had for you was yours.
But you let all that go,
So I have to look at you and say so.

-Esmeralda

From The Beat: Simple and beautiful, we'd love to hear more from you, Esmeralda!

Your Worst Enemy

A time I was my own worse enemy was most of the time. I become my own enemy when I'm angry and frustrated and there is nothing I can do about it. I try to calm myself, but most of the time I can't control my anger.

have sabotaged a lot of my life when it was going good for me and this is why I am in jail and not on the outs free.

A time I sabotaged my life was when I'd go out and do things I'm not supposed to be doing. I do what I do because it is me. I try not to go out and do things, but I can't stop my needs. I just take the risks because life is a risk and I'm going to take it because I only have one life and I am going to make my life the best of it as I can.

People sabotage things when things are good because they can't control what goes on in their life or the way things happen or sometimes they just don't care and say forget everything and do what their needs are.

Well, I guess this is all I'm going to write for now until next time. Yah boy is out...

-Dopeboi

From The Beat: When we're mad or frustrated we aren't really thinking right because our emotions get so whacky that our thoughts aren't really clear, but when you know that's happening you have to stop and breathe. When you're mad, you have to try to calm yourself down so that you can handle the situation the way it should be handled, without violence. What do you think that you could do to calm yourself down when your feel your emotions rising? Life is a risk, but that doesn't mean that doesn't give you the right to PUSH IT.

It's Hell In Here

Hey what's up, Beat Within? This is for all you kids still locked up, and it's hella gay in here, you have to do what they want you to do. You have to eat when they want and you have to wear other peoples' clothes and that sucks.

So whenever you get out, stay out, so you don't have to come in here. All you do is hella miss your family. So when you get out, don't do nothing dumb, just go to school and do good and get a good job because no girls wants a guy that has no money. Just do good and don't come back because it hella sucks, ok, late.

-David

From The Beat: We know it sucks having to follow someone else's regiment, but if you stick it out and keep your mind busy then you'll be out sooner than you think. What do you think you can do to occupy your time? Maybe try to draw or read? So, what are your plans once being free?

Thinking Back

There was a time when I was locked up. When I was locked up, I was planning on doing good, and I had everything planned out. I was doing good, getting better grades, calmed down on the drinkin', and calmed down on my anger.

That means I didn't get mad 'cause my mom told me to come home at a certain time or 'cause someone stepped on my shoes.

Someone got me mad one day, I just lost it and went out of it and next thing you know I'm locked up. I'm kicking it with some homies I knew from the back then, and I'm drinking with them again. I'm back on the wrong path again. I'm hella mad, but I could only be mad at myself. But again I just wish that it had never happen.

-Daniel

From The Beat: You know, sometimes our plans don't go as well as we thought they would, but you've got to pick yourself up from things like that! It's not the end of the world when things don't go the way you planned. What do you think you can do to try to get back on the right path when you feel your plans start to sway?

Mi Familia

Que-Vole, Beat? Well today I'm going to drop a couple of lines about how much I'm missing mi familia. Damn, I wish you would know how hard it is to be away from the people that you love more than your own life.

Well, let me tell you it's one of the hardest things that I have ever had to do in my life. I feel like a part of me is missing, I can't stand the fact that I am missing out on special moments in their lives. I want them to know that I am missing them like crazy and that I love them more than life itself. I want to let them also know I'm sorry for doing the things that I've done to put myself in this position.

I'm going to try better next time. I promise to them I'm not going to do anything to get myself in here again because I don't want to lose any more time with them.

Well Beat, I said what I had to say, got to go now. Stay up to everyone doing time. Keep your heads up high 'til the end of time; you'll be out soon!

-Huera

From The Beat: We understand how you're feeling, Huera, even if some of us haven't been through the same situations as you. We know that some of you guys think it isn't cool to cry for your family but they're normal emotions and we shouldn't ridicule our peers for having them. What would you say to someone, girl or boy, who's in the same situation as you and misses their family?

Blame Yourself

Johnny is the name and life is what me and you are going through. You're not in here because of her or his fault or even, "I was under the influence."

You're locked up and no one to blame but yourself, you should be ashamed... I am, I have done wrong, yet I'm still standing strong.

I think I'm hard saying this with a pencil in my right and on my left my heart. So be ashamed and F be the last name, I say this proud so this is my last day.

-Eil

From The Beat: At least you've learned something important—acceptance. You're right, we make decisions, we act and we get pay the consequences of our actions. You're a great example. The next question is, what will Johnny F do now? Can he get himself out of this hole he got himself into?

The Big L

What's good ,Beat? Me nothin', just takin' it day by day.

Well, today I want to talk about the Big L, yeah twenty-five to life. See, everyone don't want to get to that point, but when you don't think you can get to that point but it can happen to you. It just happens. I get irritated when kids complain about getting six months or a year. Now when you get twenty-five what you gonna do?

I never thought that some shhh like this would happen to me. Now I'm sittin' here just waitin' to see what's gon' happen to me. I'm a seventeen year old diva rippin' to the day I die, lookin' at the rest of my life in prison.

So all I can say to you youngstas is be cool 'cause you don't know what's goin' to happen to you. In five months on my court day I will be headed to Elmwood, damn time went by and all ya'll complainin' about little time. You should be thankful and don't take it for granted 'cause that one time can be the last.

Well, stay up we goin' to make it.

-Faith

From The Beat: We can understand why you would be irritated by the other girls crying about their time when you're facing bigger challenges but you have to realize they might not have the same strength as you. How do you feel about facing such a big challenge in your life, Faith? We know that The Beat readers appreciate your great advice and we want to thank you for sharing this piece of wisdom.

Shhh Happens

This is Carlos. So I'm gonna talk about my life when I was doing a lot of things like jackin' cars, smoking meth every freakin' day. Now I know that I was doing the wrong things, but whatever, things happen.

-Carlos

From The Beat: You're right, Carlos, things do happen but we can learn from these uncontrollable occurrences that happen in our life. It's up to you to mold your life into what you want it to be!

Don't Do Drugs

What's up, The Beat? With regrets I wish that I never do drugs again in my life 'cause drug mess people up in different ways. So men and girls, don't do drugs.

-Gustavo

From The Beat: Thanks for your advice. You stay away from them as well.

New And Improved

Well, I noticed myself change a lot. I never cared what I did or what I did to others but since I've been here for a while now I've had a chance to really catch up with myself and where I really want to go in life. I find myself not just acting anymore, I actually think about," Okay, if I do this I'ma catch more time," and that's all I need is to get more time.

When I get out I already know what I'm going to do. I have a chance to change so I'm going to take that for granted and move up in life. I'm going to go to school, get a job, and get my dream car then maybe get a man because I know I'ma do what I have to do first.

Now that I'm almost 18, I noticed that I messed up a lot of years that I could have been doing things that were going to make me come up in life. But I'm still young and I'm ready to show everyone who thought I was just going to be another homegirl locked up her whole life that I'm gonna make it in life.

-Miranda

From The Beat: We are rooting for you, Miranda. We can feel your determination and your passion to change and we know that you can do it! What would you say to all the doubters who think the kids in the hall won't and cannot change? We'd tell you what we would say but it isn't nice!

How to Use The Gouda

Well, we can use some money for people who don't have health care but are immigrants also use some money for schools and jobs. We can give people back their jobs or make new companies for others who need jobs to support families especially immigrants.

-Erika

From The Beat: These are great thoughts, Erika, we'd love to hear more!

What's The Difference?

Why is it when people fight in wars and all the killings be going on it's okay, but when we fight for what we think is right and all the killings go on in the streets all of a sudden it turns into a bad thing and people start getting locked up.

-Izzy

From The Beat: You're right on one thing—killings people in war is wrong. It's never been right in our eyes and in the eyes of millions of people. But, when you compare it to "your killings over what you think is right," it makes it even worse. Violence

Love Is...

Love is pain
And pain is love.
You're my stars up above,
Your love is so sweet and tender
But at the same time it can be painful.
I try to hold you so tight
But all you do is push me to the side.
You tell me you love me
But all you do is cheat on me.
How can that be?

-M

From The Beat: We know that love can be both a physically and emotionally painful experience but the great thing about love is that it never runs out! Sometimes we stay with people who hurt us because we love them too much to leave but there has to be a time when you stand up and say, "No more!" It might seem self-centered but you can't forget about your feelings and your needs, Martinez. If you do that then you lose who you are and that person will never think to change because they know that they can get away with hurting you.



Missing You

The person I miss the most is my niece Sabrina. Damn, she is three years old and she always asks my sister where I'm at and when I call she's the first person I always want to talk to but when she asks me where I'm at and when am I coming home it hurts.

I could feel my heart break and my eyes water because I hear her lil soft voice and before I hang up she tells me "I'm praying for you" and to "come home safe". But when I go home the first thing I'm gonna do is take her to the store and she is going to pick out anything she wants and I'ma take her to the park and watch her play.

-Miranda

From The Beat: It's hard when you have a younger family member who doesn't really understand why you are gone or why you can't call all the time. We know how hard it must be on you too, Miranda, and we can feel your pain through reading this piece. Why don't you write to her and let her know that although you aren't there with her doesn't mean that you don't love her any less? Does your niece know where you are? Maybe when she gets older you can tell her what you've been through because we know that she will gain a wealth of knowledge from you.

My Beautiful Mama

This is Isabella coming from Sunnyvale. Well, I'm not feeling these topics so I'ma write about my mom.

Well, I would have to say that my mother is my world. She has put up with so much BS from me. Even though my dad left us when I was 5 years old, she managed to play both mother and the father role. I remember when we moved into our first apartment we had no electricity.

She is the most beautiful woman in the world. Even though me and her have our ups and downs, I will always love her. My mother is very independent and she doesn't need to rely on a man to support her. She has given up so much for me. When she had me as a young teenager, she managed to work two jobs and go to school. I want to repay her back for all she's done for me, but being here doesn't help.

I've been here since early December and don't know when I'm getting released. Hopefully soon! Because all these years I've been messing up in school and not listening to her but as soon as I get released I want to prove to her I can change and make something of myself. Well, that's all I got to say for now. Much love.

-Bella

From The Beat: The statistics tell us that kids from the inner cities are most likely to grow up in single parent households because of drugs or a parent is incarcerated or etc. and we think that's a crock of shhh. It might be true in some cases but not all of us grow up in single parent homes because of these things. Sometimes our mother/father is trying to protect us from emotional or physical harm but does that mean our families are lesser compared to two parent, suburbanite families? No it doesn't and we are so glad that you wrote this piece to show the statistics and everyone else out there that our single mothers/fathers are amazing.

My Mom

Well there has never been a time where I been my own enemy but there been a time when I hated myself. I hated myself when the first time I came in here and like the times that I am here because my mom is stressing, like everyday I'm here, and she cries a lot so I feel bad of what I choose to do. But being here makes me really realize that my mom really cares about me.

-Irene

From The Beat: We understand how badly you must feel to know that your mother is stressing over you but you shouldn't hate yourself because of it. Hating yourself will not get you where you need to be, instead think positively. Use your mother as motivation to better yourself.

My Dad

What's good with it, Beat? Well, I'm back again, the 9th time and the last. I'm gonna turn 18 in a few months and I'm tryin' to do 6-8 months and terminate my probation.

Well, I got some bad news the other day, I found out my dad has cancer. He's only got a few months to a year to live. He smokes a lot of dope so I'm sure that will speed up the process. I'm sad, I ain't never lost no one in my family before. I hope he holds on 'til I get out!

Other than that I'm doin' cool, I guess. Yeah, but I'm hungry I need to eat somethin' fast! Well, that's all I got time fo'.

Obama! The change is in you.

-Power & Money

From The Beat: Wow, Power, we know that you must be going through a very tough time. How do you feel about being away from your family at such a hard time in your lives? Doctors know a lot more about cancer and cancer treatments then they did in the past, so your father may have a much longer stay than they said. Have you spoken to your dad about quitting his habit? Speaking to him about this might make him realize that his life is not worth the risk. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family, Power, and we are so grateful that you shared this with The Beat readers and us.

Your Own Worst Enemy

I seem to find myself in the same situations over and over again. It seems like no matter how hard I work or how hard I try I keep failing. I had to look deep down inside and realize the reason I kept failing and letting my family down was because I was scared. Scared of succeeding, scared of succeeding and then failing again.

I realized that I always sabotaged myself. It seems right when things start changing in my life for the better. This overwhelming fear hits my heart. What if I can't do or meet these expectations? What if I'm not the best mother in the world? What if I fail, what would my mother think and could I handle it? This is a lot to think about, a lot to face, especially being young.

Right when I think it's finally over, I'm gonna just stay home and be a mother, I go off and leave her again and always end up in jail. One day soon I will be that mother that my daughter needs.

One day...

-Stormee Haney

From The Beat: There will always be "what ifs" in your life, it's how you handle it that matters. Being scared of the unknown is normal and we all go through these type of "what if I fail" "what if I'm not a good parent" type of questions. How do you think our mothers were when they first had children? It's a scary experience for every new parent. We aren't programmed to know exactly what to do but you can always find someone more experienced who knows what to do. Knowledge can be passed down, you just have to have the courage to find it. We know that you can be an awesome mother, you just have to try!

What To Do

I think what needs to change about myself is like I need to get my things together 'cause I shouldn't even be here. Well yeah, I should 'cause I committed a crime but I should be doing something else because I'm way too young to be doing all this!

-Irene

From The Beat: What do you think that the system should change about the juvenile halls? If teens commit crimes then what should the government do, other than lock them up and walk away?

Everyone's Talking Change, Are You?

What needs to change from me is a lot. My attitude, I should have a better attitude with people and myself. Also, I need to stop hanging out with the wrong people and getting into trouble a lot and not listening to my parents because I don't want to listen to what they have to say, I should start listening to my parents because now I know they're right about everything they tell me.

Another thing that needs to change is I shouldn't care about what people think of me. What I really need to change in my life is to get out of here and going home where I belong and doing good and change my schools, going to school in Sunnyvale and doing what I am supposed to do so I could graduate on time with the right credits and finding new and better friends.

Also not take things for granted all the time. Being there for my family instead of going out all the time or running away because it doesn't help my problems, that's why I got in here and for something else. Now I know what I need to do to change.

-Alicia

From The Beat: You seem to know what you need and where you want to change and that's more than what some adults know about themselves! Now, you know where and what you want to change but how do you go about making these changes a reality? How do you go about changing schools, friends, and your environment? There are many resources out there to use to your advantage but you have to know where to look and who to call. We're always here to help whenever you need and we look forward to seeing you succeed in life!

I Sabotaged Myself

Well for me, I need to change the way I act when I'm mad. I don't throw things or hit anybody, I just explode and run to my room to watch a movie. I mean, I know how to control it, it's just one time I flipped into a goblin. I wish I hadn't done what I did that got me in here, I feel so bad but hey it's not the end of the world. I just got to change my anger because I am all the time happy and that's the way I need to be all the time.

Yes, I sabotaged myself the day I got in here. My brother finally went to a church with my mother but I didn't go 'cause I felt depressed. But I always play with my daughter and always cooking and being happy but for some reason I didn't go to church with them and the whole problem that started could have been avoided. That's why I need counseling and anger management but I definitely need to go home with my little girl 'cause she needs me and I need her. Also my mom needs me and I need her as well plus I feel isolated in here like if I'm drowning and the only person that can help me is my mom and family members.

Hopefully, my PO and judge lets me go home early just on CRP and classes. I think people sabotage things right when it gets better because they're scared of greatness and success.

-Erika

From The Beat: We all have our emotional problems, whether it's anger problems or depression issues. Thankfully we live in a more modern world, go back 20 years and it would have been taboo to speak openly about your stress problems. Never feel like you have to be ashamed about your feelings because they're natural and seeking help for them doesn't make you any lesser but only a stronger and better woman!

I just want my family to be back together because my brother and my sister are locked up and now me.

Everyone's Talking Change, Are You?

What I want to change, for me, is to get along with other people and don't hang around with the people that I'm hanging out with because they get me in trouble and I don't want to get locked up anymore. I want to go back to school because I stopped going to school and I want to go back.

Also, I just want my family to be back together because my brother and my sister are locked up and now me. I just want all of us to be together. I got a couple of other stuff I want to say, is to do everything right so I can go to college and study for a doctor and finish college and start working.

I can get money, buy me a house and a car and all the stuff I want and that's how I will be happy like that. I also don't want to smoke anymore I don't want to do drugs, I don't want to kick it anymore. The end!!

-Yesenia

From The Beat: It's never easy when families are split apart and it is probably the biggest fear for our mothers and fathers. What do you think you can do to bring your family together again? You also have to focus on yourself, Yesenia. You have very big plans for your life and we know that you can do it. What about helping your brother and sister with their plans that they'd like to do in their life? You can use this opportunity to bring your siblings and yourself closer together. We know that you can do it, Yesenia!

...shoplifting leads to the company running low on money meaning they have to fire some employees, leading to people being poor.

Life is Hard

When I was a little girl
My mom use to tell me I make her hurl,
My step dad told me I was his little pearl.
I didn't know what was true
So I didn't know what to do,
So I ran away from them.
I went to my room,
I heard a loud boom,
I thought I had come to my doom.
So I ran out
Then I gave a loud shout,
Then they ran to me and beat me.
My life was hard,
It was like it depended on a card
But I still live and thank goodness to that.

-Stacks

From The Beat: Yes, thank goodness to being alive. Many of us take for granted the lives we have when many people in third world countries are suffering from living in a war zone. You are not alone, Stacks, and whenever you need a helpful ear then we're always here to listen. Sometimes it's better to just talk without having someone give you an endless list of suggestions!

Everyone's Talking Change

I believe people should be taught that shoplifting is worse than it appears to be. First of all, shoplifting leads to the company running low on money meaning they have to fire some employees, leading to people being poor. Which is actually the main reason people shoplift in the first place. If people learned this they might think twice before shoplifting something because in this world everything has an effect and what goes around comes around.

-Tina

From The Beat: Shoplifting is serious, it goes way beyond what anyone really thinks and we are so grateful to you for bringing this up with The Beat readers! Stores close down because of excessive five-finger discount shoppers and it causes the communities, families, and store owners a lot of money. What do you think we can do to stop kids (and adults) from boosting, stealing, etc?

One Day...

When I grow up, it was so hard for me 'cause I was the oldest one and everyone wanted to beat me up. So when I grew up, I went back to those people and messed them up, it was fun for me.

No one understands me only drugs and my homies and that's the way it is so forget it; it was my everyday thing. It was fun until I got caught up with a gun. Forget it, I didn't learn my lesson, maybe one day I will.

-Juan

From The Beat: We won't lie, Juan, revenge can be sweet...but you don't have to resort to your fists to get back those people that terrorized you when you were younger. Just like you're making mistakes, they made mistakes in their past. That's the past and you should let it go. Your mentality is what worries us. If you keep thinking like this, you won't get a chance to even learn your lesson. You already been shot, what else are expecting to happen to get the point?

Your Mom Is Your One True Friend

During some of my experiences I have noticed that there aren't many real friends out there. Everyone is just acting and sometimes my mother told me this too, she told me that she's a true, real, dependent friend. She's been there for me during harsh times and did what she could to help me.

-Skur-y

From The Beat: Sometimes we think that our family is against us because they won't let us do the things we want but in reality they just want us to do good and stay out of trouble. They really are our true friends, whether we believe it or not. Have you told your mother how you feel? We know that she would appreciate it and it will probably make her feel better about your absence.

Obama and The Economy

This economy is all screwed up...what we fail to realize is that America is broke and people are in denial of that...if you don't know we are in a bad ass recession right now...people getting laid off like dogs taking a piss...Obama is president and we are all hoping for a change...but do you really think that is going to happen?

Not to put nobody down, I give it up to that ninja OBAMA...but to tell you the truth Obama is just a puppet. The government is just making us think that he is going to make a change...but he's not, they going to make Obama mess up this world...soon you will see...but stay tuned for next time for more...

-Faith

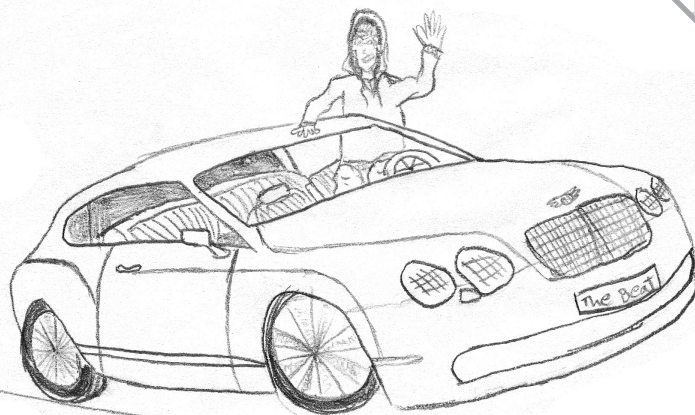
From The Beat: Sometimes people will see things that they don't like so they tune the problem out because it's ugly and they don't want to deal with it...kinda like the recession, Faith. But if we all take such a pessimistic view on these issues then the country would get stuck into a rut. President Obama cannot make all these changes himself, the nation has to band together and help out in any way they can. What do you think the youth community could do to help with solving the problems the U.S. faces now and in the future?

Drugs Messed Me Up

The time when I was my own enemy was when I had opportunity to keep working in my job, but then I started doing drugs again and stopped going to work. Then they fired me and now I regret not going to back work. But it was all because of drugs that messed up my chance to keep working and getting paid, but now I learned from that mistake, to just stay away from those drugs.

-Al

From The Beat: You're still so young, Al! There are other careers out there for you and there are other important things to focus on like what college to go to and how to apply for a grant for college! You're life is not over because of the stuff that you've done as a teen. You have your whole life to worry about money so right now we suggest you focus on how to be a better person and finish school.



The Wal Mart Crowd

I think we should have one minute of silence for that Wal Mart worker that died by a crowd of zombies. I think that a laptop, or a flat screen TV, or an I Pod is not worth killing an innocent guy who just went to work on a regular day. And I think they should have some security at Wal Mart so they can keep the crowds under control.

Anyway, I think they should make the people in the crowd pay for the funeral and all the expenses. There was no good reason for getting crazy and impatient just for some great deals. Now they are going to remember that day for the rest of their lives.

-L

From The Beat: It is sharp of you to recognize that Wal Mart bears some responsibility for this tragedy. Had better security been in place, the tragedy might not have occurred. It will be, as you point out, a terrible memory that the people in that crowd must bear, for the rest of their lives. Good writing, L.

How I Feel

Someone knows how I feel.
Everybody in my business
trying to solve my deal.

But it's time to hit the spot,
shake it 'til it's hot.

Singing: Dear Beat Within,
don't do me wrong, 'cause
it's like Bob Marley said -

Ima be writing 'til my brains are gone -
to The Beat Ima be writing 'til my thoughts
are done.

-R

From The Beat: OK, lay it on us.

The Shopping Tragedy

Well, before I start, let me give my condolences to the family members of that Wal Mart worker who died.

First of all, a bargain is not worth someone's life, and it's crazy that people in New York broke down the doors, and what is more crazy is that no one stopped to help the guy. I also think that Wal Mart should pay for the funeral, or help pay something. This says that our country is more materialistic than ever. It's embarrassing that this happened in our country. For the people who got caught on the surveillance tape, I think that they should also have to pay for the funeral.

Well anyway - thanks to Dennis The Menace for coming. He is a trip. 'Til next time.

-B

From The Beat: Thanks for your thoughtful response. This is a real life horror story. May we all remember it the next time we're in a crowd.

Messed Up

It's pretty messed up how somebody, or a whole crowd, can just trample an innocent employee at Wal Mart, just for some "on sale" items. What I feel sorry for is the victim's family. I think the least the people who were responsible for the death should do is pay for the funeral and give money to the family of the victim.

I also think the person who ripped off the doors should pay the most, because if it wasn't for that, the tragedy might not have happened. But who am I to judge.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: It sure was messed up. No amount of money can pay for the loss of the worker's life, and the fact that so many people are to blame adds to our sadness and frustration over this event.

From The Beat: In Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall, The Beat held a special writing workshop the day after Thanksgiving. The topic took on the news of that Black Friday, which is what the day after Thanksgiving is known in the shopping world. It's the busiest shopping day of the year. Many stores offer big bargains in hopes of attracting shoppers. Sometimes, large crowds of consumers gather outside their favorite stores before the stores open. The people in the crowd want first dibs on the good deals. This Friday morning, at a Wal Mart store in New York, the crowd didn't wait for the store to open. It broke down the doors and rushed inside. In the process, the crowd trampled a Wal Mart worker to death. Apparently, no one stopped to help the worker. We'd like you to think about this tragedy, for a few minutes, before you start writing. A few things to consider might be: How much is a good bargain really worth? Surveillance cameras may have caught this event on film. If so, what should happen to the people in the crowd, the people who trampled a man to death on their way to buy a cheap flat screen TV, or to get a good deal on a lap-top computer? What does this event say about our country? Read on and find out... ofcourse writers are free to write whatever is on their minds.

Don't Go There

Don't go there.

Don't ever go there.

Do not ever joke about my kid.

Don't ever talk about him.

He means the world to me.

He is my life.

I will protect him with my life.

I would do anything for him.

He is all I have.

No one has ever talked about him in a disrespectful way,
so I do not know what to say.

I will take care of him.

-Nikko

From The Beat: Taking care of your son means taking care of yourself. You can't do it from behind walls and bars. Make a plan for staying out and for becoming the dad you want to be. You are highly motivated. But you need a plan. You need to get a degree. You need a job. There's work to be done. Being a good dad is hard work, but it's very, very important work. So get to it. Good luck.

Today

Today I'm just gonna write about my day. It was cool. We had some weird programs

that I hated, though. Dinner was bomb. We ate pizza, and during lockdown I screamed out "ef your life" to the kid next to me. I was just messing with him because he kept saying "ef your life", too. Oh, and poetry with Dennis was cool again.

Man, Dennis is hella funny. Sorry for the language, but it's how I express myself. But anyway, Jill is cool too. They really laid back and chill.

Well, after they leave I'm gonna read The Beat and see what's in it. I know we ain't supposed to give shoutouts but I wanna give a shout out to Dennis The Menace and Jill.

-B

From The Beat: Sounds like you had a full day - some good moments, some not-so-good, some laughs, some time to read and write. We're glad you're enjoying the Beat workshops and we appreciate your writing. What was the most interesting thing you read in The Beat this week? Why?

The Wal Mart Worker's Death

A bargain ain't worth people dying.

It ain't worth families crying.

People trying to be the first to get a better deal -

A death is what they bought

and now probably the court

is what they got to deal with.

A charge is probably what they will get,
and that's for real.

I don't think a life is worth that stuff

'cause in the conscience a guilt will live.

-Jaime

From The Beat: Good poem about a difficult subject.

Since The Cradle

Since the cradle
I've cast a shadow of evil in my town,
with a blood stain on my shirt.
I made a promise to myself
that I wouldn't ditch the cause.
But I became a ghost when I got locked up.
I don't regret anything I did
except for how I made my family feel.
Here, the rooms are dusty,
the nights are cold,
the phone sucks.
I can't wait 'til I get home.

-Youngster

From The Beat: Your poem is very challenging for us to comment on. First we'd like to say - good writing. But then we must add that it troubles us, too. You say you don't regret anything. (Or rather - the voice of the speaker in the poems says it.) We know that we don't have a right to assume that the voice in the poem is you, because a poet has as much right as a fiction writer to make up characters. But whoever the character is, it is disturbing that the character doesn't seem to have learned anything from the experience of being incarcerated. In fact, this character says he will never 'ditch the cause'. But the cause seems to have ditched him. We call it a misplaced loyalty to honor the gang above one's family. We hope that this character learns what's truly valuable, before it's too late. Maybe we'll hear something from this character again.

Gun Violence

A gun could save lives and a gun could take lives. Either way, a gun can make someone die. Kill someone and you could be sent away for life. So guns ain't no lie. It's the real deal.

On the streets, it's serious stuff. If you pack heat, pull it out and someone will shoot back, and six feet deep is where someone will be. So I suggest that you don't pack, 'cause when you do, you hurt you and your family.

-Jaime

From The Beat: We hear you Jaime, and we agree with you. What do you think it would take to get everybody to turn in their guns? And instead of saying "that will never happen", imagine that it could happen. Then tell us how we might possibly reach that point.

Still Hella Time To Do, But...

I still have hella time to do but I will be out there, waxing again, taking care of biz. To my homies in the calles and the pintas, much love. And a shout out to the lifers.

Sad, boy, just so sad - sorrowful, painful, mournful. I still hold my head up high, with a positive mentality. The fields surround us on the central coast, turning bodies into ghosts. You'll see my Cadillac as a hearse - worse than a Bible with a curse. But today, no regrets and no remorse.

-Andres

From The Beat: Terrific piece. As it moves along it turns into a powerful poem. Good work, Andres.

Weird Foods

A weird food we eat here in juvy is ham and yams. I had never heard of that until I came here. Also, the leftover food we get from the day before is weird. Most of the food here sucks, but it's either eat or starve. Today we had some good food. Dinner was the best. We had pizza and some pineapple. For snack we had ice cream. So today has been pretty much a good day. Peace.

-W

From The Beat: Right. We know what you mean. Most of the time yams are served with snails, or frogs legs. So that ham, that's weird.

Speaking Up About A Trip

Here's a story about me and my two friends. We were best friends in middle school, but one of them moved to LA. But the other one stayed here. He'd bought a car and so one day we drove down to visit our other friend in East LA. He said he knew some girls in Mexico and a place we could stay. So we drove down there for the weekend. We partied like there was no tomorrow.

On the way back, when we were crossing the border, one of my friends said he had three pounds of marijuana hidden in the car. I couldn't freaking believe it. He didn't tell me anything until we were at the border. Luckily, we made it. That was one experience I had to speak up about, and tell them that it wasn't cool. I was hella scared crossing that border. But they were laughing. It seemed funnier, afterwards. Well, that's my real life story. We're still good friends.

-Shocked Passenger

From The Beat: You are lucky that you and your friends didn't end up facing federal charges. The danger those guys placed you in doesn't sound much like friendship, to us. We're glad you didn't let it pass. If you hang out with those guys again, ask a lot of questions before crossing any borders, actual or metaphorical.

Speaking Up

It's always good to speak up, unless it's not necessary. If you're on the same page as me, you'll know what I'm talking about. If you're chilling with homies and one homey gets dp'd, you should keep your thoughts to yourself. But if you see a male beating a woman, you should speak up, because that stuff is not cool.

-S

From The Beat: You are right - that stuff is not cool at all. In general, we agree with you that it is often best to keep quiet and observe. But when something really bad is happening, you should indeed speak up. Good piece.

In The Shadow

I walk in the shadow of death.
As I look up from the ditch,
my body is in a state of shock.
The bullets knock on my chest.
My shirt is stained with blood.
They close my coffin, like a trap door.
I'd made a promise
I would never reach the surface.
Over the months my body turns to dust,
my soul, a ghost.
There is sadness in this grave that no one
but the bees will visit him.

-Andres

From The Beat: Hey, where have you been keeping these poems, A? This one's dark, but fine.

The Promise

I made a promise
to not fall in the ditch -
to stay on the surface.
While I walked in the shadow
of the night, a trapdoor opened.
A cradle waited.
I fell on my skull.
As I lay there bleeding,
I felt myself becoming a ghost.

-B

From The Beat: Scary poem B. But a good one.

Posted

What crackin wit you Beat? Man am still posted in here,
I got like 53 days then I head to new foundations but yea.

-Juan

From The Beat: So what about you, who's your worst enemy? Who's your biggest ally? What are you thinking about as you post?

Doing Good

I'm doing good in this program I'm finally getting my furloughs and I'm feeling good. I should be getting out in about a couple of months and I can't wait. Ima be with my baby mama and my family and Ima be back in school and get my credits, hopefully get a job and take care of me, my kid and be a happy family with my girl.

-Yung Rell

From The Beat: Congratulations on getting your furloughs, feeling good, and doing well. You sound clear about what's most important to you. Keep going!

People

People always think they should get everything! They think they own the place when it's not even theirs!

People are even selfish enough to think that even though they're in a place where they don't own anything they think everything should be about them and what they want or about where they sit, shower, and sleep!

People get to me when they don't think about anyone but themselves! I don't get why people who are selfish deserve things good!

-Lil' Skittles

From The Beat: We actually think everyone deserves good in life! We too however are frustrated when people feel they must be selfish. Do you think people are sometimes afraid they won't get what they need?

Behind Enemy Lines

My worst enemy is the inside of me...it's because I have to fight myself everyday to make the right choice but it seems like I let my enemy take over my life and win the battle. That's my enemy, it's myself.

-Marky

From The Beat: People say this is true for all of us, also that our biggest ally is inside of us too. There's a story that names them wolves that fight inside of us—and they say the one that wins, (the good or the bad) is the one that we feed. Do you feed the enemy inside of you with thoughts and by giving up? Can you feed the other side with encouragement, hope, and love?

Only 41 Days

A whats crackin Beat. Me just chillin in New-Founds. I'm hecka juiced because 7 1/2 months already went by. Now its only 41 more days til I get out.

I was just wondering if I could get in contact with The Beat when I get out. How? Put this in The Beat and answer me. Because I'm trying to write to The Beat and let you know whatsup with my job and tell you how I'm doing in school.

-Pulga

From The Beat: Congratulations! But you know we had to edit most of your piece because you were talking about plans for when you get out that will just end you up in the same old hole. Your sense of pride is important, and needs to include what you work to accomplish in your life. YES please write to us and let us know how your job and school is going. Our address inside on the first pages of every Beat.

Keeping My Head

Man I wanna change but it seem like the world I'm in ain't.

I just lost three potnas this week. This shhh getting crazy.

Hopefully the ghetto calm down when I touch down.

Get a degree hopefully.

-Wanna Change

From The Beat: We are sorry about the loss of your friends. It sounds like it might be very wise for you to focus on something like getting a degree. What are you interested in studying?



Whip Lash

What that do Beat this that ninja Shawny from Vallejo tryna get there fast like whip lash-but the system tryna give me April but ya boy been in here since March 08 so I'ma fighting! Back in February ya dig?

-Shawny

From The Beat: We edited to keep everything in your own best interest. How would your life be if you were willing to get there slowly, or just not at break-neck speed?

Over a Year

Well today I'm going to talk about my life. They call me young Goof, I'm from Vacaville. I'm 17 years old and I've been in here for over a year. I got out in March and I've been in here since October of 2007. Well Beat I'm get at ya'll. So until next time.

-Goofy

From The Beat: We know the details of your current incarceration, but we're sure there's much more that's important about your life. What did you love to do when you were a kid? What's it like to be you in your family, do people take the time to understand and know you? How was school for you, and are you finished? If you could always be your best self, what would that be like?

Your own Worst Enemy

I am my worst enemy because when I got out the last time I was only out for one day then I got locked again and now I got to be here for a while, and that's why I am my worst enemy.

-Free for One Day

From The Beat: You may be your own worst enemy, and you may also be your best ally. Which do you listen to? People say it's like having wolves that fight inside of you, and that the one that wins—is the one you feed. Use your time inside to get to know yourself, the bad and the good!

Random?

The thing is when I don't know I feel trapped and stuck, when I can't talk to or see her the days go by slower than anything. The day that I will be calm is the day we can be free together and flourish in our own beauty and thoughts. Minds racing...constantly pulsing with questions and answers, yet I just don't know.

Any more stress and I'll explode...Move. Get out, get free complete everything so you can be together! That's just some of it I don't know I'm being random with what's on my mind. But it's true I want to scream at people, "I'm in love."

-Murmur

From The Beat: Do you wish you could scream at people so that they would know, or because you feel overwhelmed by your own strong feelings? How can you honor your love? (that feeling, knowledge inside)

Your Own Worst Enemy

Thursday October 3rd, 2008 during school hours about 12 pm when I was walking out the principals office with a big smile on my face, feeling nothing but good inside of me. I was just notified that I earned my work permit.

After 6 months that I been trying to do good. Attend to school everyday and have strait A's. I finally hit my bullseye. Well that's what I had though until October 4th, 2008 about 7:15..To be continued

-Mc

From The Beat: Regardless of what happened on the 4th, everything you did up to that point is still true. It's not like you'll ever "get there." Life is a process, you keep trying and you do reach goals. When you reach goals you set new ones, Now you know you can do what you set your mind to.

Handle my Business

What I need to do to get out of here is handle my business, listen to staff. When I get out I'm going to stop selling drugs and stop doing hot shh so I don't get arrested.

-Syc0

From The Beat: You have some good ideas. What are you going to do instead of selling drugs? How will you get money? What are you good at? Maybe that could somehow help you get a job.

I Miss You

My thoughts are true, I want to be with you, I left you all alone, All I could do is call you on the phone, roses are dead violets are boo I'm in jail but not with you.

-Trouble

From The Beat: Can you write a letter? It can be hard to have to deal with your feelings when you have a lot of time alone. Reading and writing often help. We're sorry about your loss.

Down Hill

I have had a lot of self sabotage. I was in the drug program and I would be doing good but I would always fall backwards. Every time I would mess up my program I felt stupid. I felt stupid because I disappoint my family and a lot of people. It wouldn't really be a big deal if I were already doing it but it hurts when your doing good.

And when I got out the program I was doing good and I self sabotaged myself. When I got out I was on the football team. (starting) my grades were up, and I was staying out of trouble. But then I started smoking weed again. Every thing was good for a minute until I got caught up by the boys.

Everything went down hill from there. I quit the football team. My grades went down, and I started popping pills and playing with my nose.

-Mc

From The Beat: We're sorry about your down fall! It sounds like you know that when you started smoking weed again you were slippin.' It seems better to sacrifice weed than your whole life and future. Do you want to create your life with things that make you feel good about yourself, or destroy yourself? That's what it comes down to, and we're not saying it's easy—but it is crucially important.

More Food

We need more food and they need to stop making more prisons. Start making more farms and jobs. They should just invest in the jails that are already made.

In our jail we don't have no more salt or pepper, milk is spoiled and orange juice is spoiled. They just say there is not enough money. I think the people are just be greedy that own the juvenile hall here.

-Luweez

From The Beat: Things are being cut and whittled away everywhere right now. Sometimes there is not enough money and sometimes we fear there won't be enough money soon.

Stimulating The Economy

I think we need to get more places in our state like houses and stores to build for the poor people that are hungry and that need jobs so they can work at the new stores that been built. And when they get enough money they can buy the new houses that been built.

I can choose to change my ways but sometimes I choose to do bad when I think of satan's demons but all I need is some help by God and I can become a better person in life. I will change!

I understand I have enemies that can mess me up and make me do wrong that's why I think my worst enemy is the people of satan that I hang around. But if I can learn about the Lord then I can become something in life.

-Raysheem

From The Beat: We all choose between creating our lives, using whatever skills and resources we have to make something of our lives, or to destroy what we have, and our potential. Sometimes it seems easier not to try so hard, because we think we won't then be disappointed. We think that you experience life through reaching and trying hard, even when it doesn't all work, than when we are depressed and watch it all disappear. Take the risk of choosing to change and see what you can make of your life!

Solano

I just got sentenced I'm servin 5 months
If I was out I'd probably be ...
but instead I'm sittin' in this tiny cell
this shhh got me hot I'm mad as hell
This shhh got me crazy I'm ready to leave
I should be out there with my ninjas getting fedi and
cheese
but it just won't happen cause the rollers wanna hate
they see a ninja eatin so they wanna take my plate
It still aint too late my ninja I aint thru wit it
I'm thinking bout my life and what I wanna do wit it
just hopin that my God let me see anotha day
and take me out the dark so I can find the way
I'm real real wit it boy and I'm livin that life
get it and stay committed like a husband and a wife
I gotta get my dough so I continue slangin
but I'm alert and a target and I know these ninjas aimin'
The cops on my clock so I know when it's hot
and when it gets to that point then I'm shakin the spot.
I'm playin a game and I'm in it to win
but these punk police had to get me again.
I told myself I wasn't comin back but I just couldn't do it
I blew it and boy I done been thru it.

-Marrea

From The Beat: You sound frustrated by this cycle. You must walk yourself out of the dark. If you don't want to come back you know what you need to do. You can't live the same life and hope it will turn out differently.

Zen

100 years of boredom
12 hours of beauty
I want to hear colors
And feel sounds
Infinity is zero
There's no point
I'm finally only comfortable
"breathe. Breathe in the air"
and so I do
What are you doing?
I'm watching the sunrise
Through an open window
Where was I?
No where
100 years of blandness
12 hours of sun in your eyes

-Lizy

From The Beat: Your writing is always interesting, we are surprised you are ever bored because you think deeply. What do you wish was "the point?" What if the blandness was somehow beautiful too?

My Weekend

Whats up with Beat? Long time no see. But yup today I'm writing about my weekend.

Well I got to go home for a few hours I got to spend time with my lil' mama and family. I had a good time, moms cooked some chicken enchiladas-man they were hecka good. I felt like not coming but then I though about it and decided to come back because if I didn't it was just going to make the situation worse than it already is. But anyways I can't wait to get my next furlough. Its hecka boring in here.

-Pancho Villa

From The Beat: By this time you may have had more furloughs. We think it's great that you get practice dealing with the outs before you are released. It's good to practice making the decisions that keep you free.

Vacaville

Where I'm from, its hard to stay out of trouble cause the gang task officers just be everywhere lookin for us, as soon as they see our clothes we get pulled over quick for no reason they just be messin with us they are just racist. They hate all the homeboys.

But other than that it's crackin especially at night, we are always at parties with hecka alcohol and a lot of females kick'n it and on the streets walkin around trying to see whats up with whoever. That's the beauty in my hood. That's it Beat for now....

-Juan

From The Beat: We understand you like to feel good and have fun. You're almost released however, and we hope you think about your life more seriously as well. The gang task officers are tipped off by the clothes you wear, if you don't want them to mess with you, don't wear those clothes. Will partying get you your goals, help you finish in school and get, and keep a good job? It's time to stop playing.



Forgives

Wassup wit it Beat. It's the homeboy back again. Am I going to change this year on what I do? I say no. I live my day by day. I can't quit the gang life. There aint no way.

When you see me in the streets I ain't doing no running. This is all the stuff I know. I was raised with this attitude. It's por vida. I ask for forgives but I feel like I had to do what I had to do but then again maybe its just the old me running with the pain.

But send all my love. And when I'm gone in this life of hate Just let my body lie in peace on top of the hill because I'm the king of the hill.

-Stunkey

From The Beat: We wish you didn't have to wait for death to have peace. We did edit to keep everything positive for everybody. Who's the old you that runs with the pain? Do you read the Beat Without in the end of the Beat?

Concentrate

Relax take a second glance!
Turn around take a chance!
Don't get put into a trance!
So we don't have to see you prance!
Its time to walk instead of dance
Never thought I'd see you in this stance!

-Lil' Skittles

From The Beat: Who are you advising in this poem? Does it apply to you too? Is it because times are tough that you think it's important to think for yourself, or because of your age? We guess there is a time to walk and a time to dance...

Baby Mamma Drama

What I know now that I didn't know a year ago... is how to stay away from baby mamas. Last year in May I met Miguel, too bad I didn't meet his babies' mamma first. One of his kids was quiet, and the other one was jealous because I was dating his dad. When His babies' mamma found out, all hell broke loose. There were non-stop phone calls to my house, as well as her showing up at my house and insults through MySpace.

Now in 2009, I have a different man in my life that does not have babies, or baby mamas around. Now I am going to leave all the baby mamma drama behind this year and be happy with my new man.

-Mayra

From The Beat: Sounds like you learned a lot last year about relationships. WE hope you keep learning as this year goes on, and remember what kinds of people and things you don't want to expose yourself to.

Money Over Crime

What's good Beat? I think that making money is important. I think this because I just turned 18 and now I have a car and have to pay insurance for it. But the thing about making money is that you have to give up other stuff like hanging out with your friends. But you will feel better about yourself by doing it the legit way and not the criminal way.

-Terrance

From The Beat: Making your own money the legit way isn't hard for most people, and we wish you luck with that. Keep spreading the good word out there.

My Girl, My Love

I love Yeng. She is my girlfriend, she is my blood and she controls my life for me. I want to tell her how much I love her. But she doesn't see my love that I give to her. When I close my eyes I see her in my dream holding hands with me. When I wake-up I always get on my knee's and pray that my dream will come true. She's the one I love. She's the one I need, I promise in my heart that when I get out, I will marry her and love her forever.

-Vang

From The Beat: You have a deep and sincere love for your girl but we noted that you mentioned that perhaps that it is not reciprocated or she doesn't see it? Sometimes in life, some of us go through a little heartbreak with a few relationships before we find a lifetime partner. We hope that one day you will find yours.

What Kind Of World Am I In

What kind of world am I living in?
Selling dope, trying to get this night in the wind.
Going around, thinking that I am in love,
My best friend had to go around and interrupt.
Woke up on my knees saying please God please,
Protect the one that has protected me
And help the homeless into what they want to be.

What kind of world am I living in?
Drive by down my block
And now my homie's dead.
Going home, finding out I got caught up with the FEDs.
Now I am lying up in somebody else's bed.
What kind of world am I living in?

-Chasity

From The Beat: The world can be a scary place, especially when you experience things that are out of your control. But we ask you now, what are you doing to make the world you live in worse?

The New President

I think that Barack Obama being the new president will really help the Black community.

-Curtis

From The Beat: We are glad to see you optimism about our new president, and we wonder how you can help your community as well as helping yourself this coming year.

God Is Great

I have had a few experiences with God. One night, I was waiting for the bus so that I could go meet my girlfriend at the mall, and I was wearing one of my best outfits including a new pair of shoes that my brother bought for me. I never made it to the mall though, because I was beat up for my shoes and stabbed seven times in my back, neck, and spine. Today I am fine and I survived.

In the past I have done bad things but got away with them and one night after work, on Christmas Eve, I rushed home to change. Then I was going to drive to my girlfriend's house to open gifts, but on the way I was pulled over and was taken into custody.

A week later, two of my best friends were in a fatal car accident and died. I can remember being in the car with the driver and telling him to slow down because he was going too fast and he just replied that he knew what he was doing and not to worry. I am not mad that I am in here today, I am grateful because I am still alive. I believe that God is great, and that he put me in here to save me from the troubles that were near me.

-Zack

From The Beat: Many things in life happen for a reason, but most of what happens depend on the choices that you make. We are sorry for your loss and hope that you do good things with the life that you still have.

My Enemy Is Me

I got enemies already up in the streets but there is this girl who's like my worst enemy. I can't stand her. She stay getting me into shhh. I am locked up because of her. I got kicked out of school because of her. She got me into pills and into gangs. She turned me into a goon. Ain't it crazy and she's me.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: We can be our own worst enemy. Strangely enough we can be the hardest problem to solve. It is very hard to self-reflect and watch ourselves. Sometimes our emotions or addictions control us but no matter who in us in doing the controlling we always pay for the actions.

Bored No More

In 2008 my big lesson was that I am doing time now for trying to hurt my sister. But now that it is 2009 I want to go home because I have learned my lesson.

The reason I tried to hurt my sister was because I was bored and I just wanted to hurt her. On of the things I learned in here is that when I am bored I can write or color, and that I shouldn't hurt people. Boredom is the devil in your mind. Sometimes when I am bored here in my room I will sleep or try to cut my wrists with my wrist band, and sometimes I can't believe that I am getting through this by myself.

-Kathryn

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot to deal with beyond boredom. It's hard to deal with your problems when you can't get past having nothing to do with your time. We hope you reach out to people and find healthy things to do with your time in and outside of the Hall.

XTC

Addicted to the pill that's what it is
Addicted to the pill and how it makes me feel.
It's a feeling you can get when you are down, or
even when you just don't want to be around.
I love it more than you will ever know
But the worst thing is it has taken control.
Over me, my body, mind and soul
I never knew how far it could go.
I wish I could go and stay away.
I'll always know it's just one call away.
So when I'm in pain or hurting all I'll have to do
is just pick up the phone and tell 'em 'come through.'

-Addicted

From The Beat: Drugs are an illusion that trap us. At first the feelings seem good but all we are doing is chasing a dragon we will never catch. Before we know it we are enslaved to this drug that we thought would free us. Free yourself.

In again

Man, I'm in here again and I'm in here with one of my best friends. I can't wait to get out and get some money. For real 'cause being in here, you can't do nothing. I practically know all the staff and it's getting real old fast. But I got love for them and what they do.

I'm about to be 18 years old in July and it's coming fast. I can't wait to get out of the system. I can't wait to see my niece Myesha and hopefully spend some time with her. I just found out my girl Shanrika cheated on me. I was so hurt but I have to move on. Hopefully I'm going to be out real soon.

-Breanne

From The Beat: Well, we are sorry you are back again. What is your plan to utilize this time? How can you put it to use? What will you do to prepare for when you get out and what will you do to prevent yourself from returning. We wish you the best.

RIP Juan

Have you ever lost anybody that you loved? Well, I have. I once had a homeboy that passed away. Everyday that goes by I ask myself, why do people die? Why do people have to suffer? I remember that day I got the phone call. My home girl called and told me what had happened. I didn't know how to react to it. I mean it was coming. I was always in the streets gang-banging, not caring about anybody sad.

He was always a down ass homie, always putting in work, never backing down. He was the down homie in the barrio but like they say, the bravest soldier always goes down first. We always pray for you homie. Always in our hearts. Rest in Paradise. We love you.

-Lady Brown

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss of your friend. We too do not understand why death happens but we know it will happen and cannot be stopped but why risk dying. We respectfully ask why people gang-bang if they know they can expect death? It doesn't make sense to us. Thank you for sharing. We wish you peace.

Good to Be Locked Up!

It's good to be locked up because I've been able to stop my addiction to weed and beer. Being locked up helped me to open my eyes to see that I was going down the wrong path. I see that it's not good and I'm going to have to chill out of my mind. I want to do well in here, if I want to do good out in society.

-Wolf

From The Beat: We are glad that you recognize your need to succeed.

Hey Beat Within!

Well see man I'm in here doing six months for something stupid, effing robbery and I still got 5 months to go. Man it sucks being in here for 5 more months. I gotta eat the same routine of food and wake up at 6:00 AM. Well that sucks very much. I miss my house, my cloths, my mom's food and more things especially my family.

Well that's all I got to say to The Beat Within. Hope I'll see you next week.

-Amber

From The Beat: Yeah JJC isn't suppose to be fun. Whatever you did to get in here, was it worth it? Thanks for sharing.

Once Upon A Time

When I was little I read stories that started with "once upon a time..." and always ended with "happily ever after." In my own life story though, I don't think there is going to be a happily ever after ending for me.

Once upon a time there was a girl who grew up sheltered from the world, her mom never taught her about all the big bad wolves that were out in the world. So when she got old enough to make her own decisions, she made the wrong ones. She started exploring things that a young girl shouldn't get into. During the time it was happening, it all seemed fun and exciting, but that was because she didn't know that she was setting herself up for failure. She became very sad because she felt like all the other teens were doing even more fun things that she hadn't been doing like drugs. So she got into that too, and now her story will not end with happily ever after.

My story is this story, and it ends with being locked up. Now I sit in a room wishing that I could just go home, and be sheltered from the wolves there, where my mom can keep me safe.

-Deezy

From The Beat: Fairy tale stories tend to not show us the real facts of life. That makes it hard to believe in them. But just because you made bad choices in the past, doesn't mean you have to repeat them, or that you can't find your own happy ending. Keep your head up and remember that we all make our own happy endings in life, even though they may not be like the fairy tales you have read.

What You Want Baby

What do you want baby?
Let me know if you want me or not.
It's hard for me to wait for you
when you don't look or talk to me.
Baby, I do everything for you,
But you don't even notice.
I really really want to be with you.

What do you want baby?
Why are you doing this to me?
I see you with another girl
And it hurts me.
I turned around and ran away from you.
I wanted to die right then and there
When I saw you with her.
You saw me and you tried to stop me
But I kept on running and crying.
I wasn't ready to talk to you then.
I couldn't face you then.
What do you want from me now baby?

-Candace

From The Beat: It hurts when the ones we care about are distant, but the best thing for you to do now is to worry about the most important person: yourself.

Couldn't Drop The Smoke.

Well, I've been on probation for two years over a misdemeanor for vandalism. I just couldn't stay clean while on probation. Weed was my problem. I was doing about seven months. I even graduated my drug program. Then I relapsed. I completed a lot of community service and only had two weeks left of probation after one and a half years. I was still smoking and drinking and I was happy to have two weeks left. I thought it was all good. My PO thought I was clean.

I was faking all my tests. I know it was the wrong thing to do but I didn't think I was gonna get caught.

Well, I had two weeks left and my PO found weed on me at school. Seven months later and I couldn't stay clean. So I've been locked up for six months to ensure that I will not use. My best advice is to do what you gotta do to stay out of the system.

- Deezy

From The Beat: It seems you were smoking and drinking all along and you could have been busted at any time. They just caught up to you a little late. It seems like staying off weed was what you had to do to stay out of the system. What do you have to do to get off weed? Can you stop smoking?

My Own Worst Enemy

I'm my own worst enemy for the fact that I'm in here and I can't do anything to prevent that. But it's all good because whatever happens I'm going to keep my head up high and ride it through. If I had another chance I'd take it and run with it because you only live life once.

So if someone like my homies kicks it with you, you're bound to get in trouble because they'll beat around the bush until you do it, like beer, weed, cocaine, and other drugs. You'll end up in here over something like robbery, burglary, assault, and all kinds of other stuff. So when someone peer pressures you just say, "nan man, I'm cool and just go kick it with someone else."

-Mat

From The Beat: Great advice!

Being Thankful

What's up Beat?

Well, I'm writing to say thanks to my dad. I thank my dad because he had been here to support me through these nine months that I have been here. Anytime I have been stressing or been depressed he has been here for me.

Also I thank God for letting me to be able to wake up everyday and letting me learn from my mistakes. For everyone out there, I want you to know that you should be thankful for those who are supporting you through this rough time.

-Sam

From The Beat: We learn from our mistakes and move forward.

One Year Wiser

Last year I was always getting high with my friends and wasn't caring about going to school. I would always ditch school and go to my friend's house. But when this year started, I got locked up for a dumb reason, and that reason is my fault. Hopefully, I will be going to SAU to get clean and stay clean.

-Wolf

From The Beat: Staying clean is very important, but so is making wise choices about who you choose to surround yourself once you are clean.

Negative Thoughts Ruin Me

I'm my own worst enemy when I let negative thoughts go through my head. When I think negative, I do foolish things like this last time. I effed up big time! See probation and the court give me a monitor for 90 days and I was 7 months away from being 18 so they let me out. I was so happy and I was gonna try once again to make my papa bear proud.

Then the negative thoughts rushed in a month after and I effed up. I left the house and cut off the monitor. All then negative memories rushed through my mind like a broken record. So I stopped caring about the person I wanted to be proud of: me. I took off for about 6 months after my 18th birthday and little did I know I would be spending 2 weeks in his place again. They haven't even sentenced me yet. But I do want to do good. I really do.

I'm already enrolled in Fresno City College to get my HS diploma I'm so excited but I just hope I don't let those negative thoughts and memories get the best of me. I'm 18 now and I can't mess up anymore or I'll go to county." That's what my papa bear would say. So, I gotta be strong and pray for the best.

-Love Sweetone

From The Beat: When a person stops caring about themselves and a person stops making the best decisions for themselves then that person is like you say "their own worst enemy." So, what does a person do when they are their worst threat? We suggest adopting mentors and discussing our situation with people who have been through the same situation as us. It is important to listen to others before we make destructive mistakes.

Giving Back To the Community

A change, I decided to drop a lot of my friends and find out what I want to do in life. Being in Juvenile Hall has me thinking about going to the army or being a firefighter to help out my community.

I have been thinking about coming back to JJC in a couple of years and cutting hair for the youth incarcerated. I want to help out a lot of people; this is a New Year's resolution that's going to help me out to forgive a lot of people.

-Terrance

From The Beat: This is a healthy outlet in helping others as you help yourself.

Just Chillin'

Today I don't know what to say. It seems like every topic now is about Obama. I know he is gonna be the Prez but hey, we can't do anything about what's going on on the outs because we're in here, but I guess that's just my opinion. I'm going to be getting out when I'm 18 so maybe I'll think more about it then, but for right now, I'm just gonna chill up here in JJC. Peace out Beat!

-Fain

From The Beat: Thanks for being honest and sharing your opinion. Here on the outs, Obama has hyped up the world and has given many people a new sense of hope. When you turn 18, we hope you register yourself to vote so you can see why all this hype going on.

What's Up Beat?

I'm almost out. I got about three weeks left. I'm just waiting and trying to stay out of trouble.

I just want to tell all out there to remember, it's not worth it so don't get too far in it. Peace out Beat!

-Lil Panic

From The Beat: Great advice! Good luck to you.

It will Come.

Might have to run
Yell, "it's coming."
Over and over its back on me; the thought "willing to do
anything to get away."
Never thought you would come back this hard
Wish I would never have gone this route at such a young
age.
Obey by its rules and you won't get hurt
Runs through our vulnerable weak minds
Street smart and has all the right words
Everyone might not get the chance to meet you but I
have
Mom warned me about you and she knew you would
come
Envy and want is something you'll never feel with it
around
You'll always get what you want and long as you work for
it
Nothing can stop it but you
You tell everybody about it. They either believe it or not
but it's out there and if you let it, your worst enemy will
come.

-Vantaza

From The Beat: You seem very aware of this destructive impulses. Work on setting up a support system. We suggest adopting mentors and discussing your situation with people who have been through the same situation as us. It is important to listen to others before we make destructive mistakes. Until we confront and come to terms with our own demons then we will never be able to advance. Good luck.

Change

I did so much bad. I don't know how to change. I try so hard to be a good person, but something always gets in the way. When I hear about it, I turn into the devil.

I don't know what to do sometimes so I go out like a savage.

Now look where I'm at, in the same place where I was before, different day and different time.

Change is good, and I need it now. Maybe it's about time. I look forward to change. Maybe it might help. But now I am doing what I am doing, trying to keep up with life, so now I am here and I am going to get done with life.

-Ceedo

From The Beat: Ceedo, let's think about this for a moment. What is it that gets in the way? What forces you to turn savage? If you can identify what these things are, then next time they come up, be strong against them. It won't be easy, but when you know what these things are that prevent you from doing good, then you're taking a step toward changing for the better. Does that make sense?

If I Would Have Known

The reason I'm locked up right now is because I made a dumb choice, and that was not to go to court. The reason I didn't go to court was because I didn't feel like getting locked up. I knew was going to get locked up, I just didn't know for how long. It turns out if I would have went to court, I would have only done three days.

So now I'm in here for two weeks, going to court hopefully, and I get out later this month. I go back to court and get one more chance in drug court. I've learned that little problems can turn into a big problem if you don't take care of it sooner.

-Jesse

From The Beat: Very good observation! Sometimes we live in fear because we don't know what will happen. We would rather run away from our problems than face them. It seems like you learned a very important lesson. How will you use this newfound wisdom in future situations?

What Matters

What matters to me the most is my mom because she does everything for me and whenever I get into trouble she is always there with no hesitation. When I see my mom crying it just kills me and it hurts more, knowing that she's probably worried sick about me.

-Timothy

From The Beat: A lot of people write to us about their moms, and our advice is the same to you. Show your mom how much you respect her by doing better things for yourself. That's all mothers want for their children.

Money Over Mom

I think that making money is important but making my mom proud is more important because money is always going to be there and your mom will not live forever.

-Numbers

From The Beat: You sound like you have gotten wiser over the last year. We wish you luck in the future and hope you do make your mom proud.

Why Time

Time is time, why is that?

I don't know why.

Time is a good name

But doing time is not so good.

-Time Counter

From The Beat: Having the time to be on this earth and make the best of what your life has to offer it the best way to use your time.

Your Worst Enemy

I think that my worst enemies are my friends because I listen to the streets instead of my mom, that's how I ended up in here again in the hall.

The streets are the reason why I got in trouble and I am going to change my life and go back to school. The streets are my worst enemy. And I know God will forgive me.

-Jaime

From The Beat: Some people try to stay away from their friends, others try to lift them up as well, whatever the choice it sounds like changes are happening for you.

I'm Going to Do It!

All my life I've been making bad choices. My mom always told me if you make wrong decisions you're going to have to pay for it. But, I never listened. Now, I wish I did.

I love my mom and my family. When I get out of here I want to finish school and complete my drug rehab. I am going to show my family I can do it. My girl wants me to do better, not just for me, but for us. When I get out I'm going to show her that I can do it. I'm going to quit smoking and I'm going to make something of myself. I miss being with my family.

My girl is beautiful. She is everything that I want in a girlfriend. She is nice and has a good personality. It sucks; I'm in here and not to mention the nasty food. It's lonely in here; I don't like it at all. I'm in here for not doing my rehab. I've missed too many days. I want to quit, but it's addicting. I'm going to quit for my family and my girlfriend.

-Joe

From The Beat: You're right, addictions are difficult. It helps to have a strong support but remember to do it for you first.

Escaping

I'm going to write about how I got in this place. I was locked up at boot camp and I was doing good and everything. I was about to go home in about a month but the staff took me with them to clean a park. When they took me an old friend of mine said he was planning to escape. I told him I would go with him too. So he and I left from the work detail and we AWOLed.

We both ran but I couldn't run anymore cause I was out of breathe so I told him to keep going. But he stayed with me. Then we saw one of the boot camp staff person come close to where we were. He was in the probation truck. My homie jumped in the canal and I did the same. Then the helicopter came and was looking for us but we were in our green suits so we camouflaged ourselves in the grape fields. We got away, and then I got caught a month later at the corner of my homie's house. But if I were to go back in time, I wouldn't have done it because I hurt my family. Now I won't get out until late this year.

So to all you people doing your time, just do it and think about what you do because it affects other people.

-Dufee

From The Beat: What a crazy story! You really learned your lesson, it seems. Running away can only make it worse. And even if you got away, you'd still have to live your life almost in hiding. It would be hard to get a job and go to school. It would be hard to turn your life into something positive. We're glad you realize you have to just face it and get through it.

My Own Worst Enemy

When I got out of boot camp again, I was continuing Teilman. I was doing well, got good grades, and was not using drugs. But once I saw a group of my friends using marijuana, I wanted to use it too.

The reason I started using again was because I just wanted to go back to those old days, like back when I started, and didn't have a problem, and I could do whatever I wanted to do.

My probation officer wanted me to take a weekend off, but I refused to go back. And so I had a warrant out for my arrest. I was out there for a good 2 or 3 months, before I ended up getting caught. Now I am stuck in the JJC, thinking that I should have just stayed away from drugs to begin with. I want things to change, but I need to change myself first.

-Andy

From The Beat: If only we could go back and undo the beginning, but unfortunately all you can do now is to learn from your mistake and not travel down the same path twice.

For The Love of Family

I really miss my family because they always treat me how I want to be treated. So that's why I want to talk about my family. I like my mom; she always buys me whatever I want. She is really nice to me and she gives me money whenever I ask her. She really loves me and I love her too.

My sister, she's the best sister. She always invites me wherever she goes. She is very nice to me and to my little brothers. I treat her pretty bad sometimes but she still forgives me. My big brother, I love. He always protects me wherever I go. My dad is really funny he always makes me laugh. He is the best dad I ever had. I thank him for supporting us and for taking care of us. Thanks dad. I love my family with all my heart.

-Antonio

From The Beat: Your family is lucky to have you too.

Stickin' It Out

Running away is a habit. When I have no options left, is when I run. I run far away, until there is nothing to see behind me. Stress takes over me and pushes me to the point where I don't want to go back.

The shelter here is good, the food is good, the bed is good, but the people are bad. Living in a group home is tough, but you have to be tough as well. I am not saying that I am not tough, because I know that I am. I have been through so many events in my life, and people tell me that they would have committed suicide if they were me.

Being in foster care since I was two years old has made me a strong person. But yet, I know that I am not strong enough because I couldn't stand to stay there for the last six months.

Now I am incarcerated and waiting to get into a new home. These are my actions, not anyone else's. I have four and a half months left so I need to give it my best shot. I AM going to give it my best shot. And no one can stop me because God is on my side.

-Bear

From The Beat: If you resolve the things that are behind you, then there is nothing to run from and you can still move forward, away from your past and all that it brings up in your heart and your mind.

My Thoughts On The New Guy

Dear Obama,

I have a lot of things on my mind. And when it comes to society I ask myself what about those people that are not rich and wealthy? Where will they go in life, besides the outskirts of the cities that they already live in? Those people need your help, and the one way that you can help them, is to give them yourself. But more than individuals need you right now, the world needs you. So go do your thing and I'm gonna do mine.

-Rudy

From The Beat: We should all do what we can to lift up our country, and Obama is proof that you don't have to be rich or wealthy to leave your home town and do great things with your life.

Screw The World

I say eff the world.

Who cares to live.

Death is so much better.

Life is hell.

Dreams are fake.

There is no love in the world.

Angels aren't real.

People die everyday.

Drugs are for dead people.

Gang members are the devil's work.

I say Eff the world.

People say they love you but they don't.

Hate life and love death.

Crying is life but who cares.

God don't bring people back when you ask.

You get locked up and never get out.

People kill and get away with it.

Good people die and bad people live

I say eff the world.

-Bethany

From The Beat: We see how this sort of thinking seems accurate when we are down. We know how things seem unfair and people can let us down but we encourage you to always look for the good in life and please never forget that we love you very much. All we can do is offer our love, you have to change your attitude to accept our love. We wish you the best.

Getting Caught

I am in here because I violated my probation and they say I stole a lawn mower. I am fighting it in court. I am trying to get my felony dropped down to a misdemeanor.

You shouldn't experience anything like this if you stay away from bad things. I first got in here because I helped my sister's boyfriend move a welding stand-up belt sander and a battery charger from his mom's house to his friend's house and it was stolen. I didn't know it was stolen and there was a truck following us and it all seemed weird. Then I got arrested later that night and so did he.

-John

From The Beat: That's too bad. Sounds like you were innocent and didn't know what you were getting yourself into. If you are around certain people and you get the feeling they might be shady, you should try to stay away from them.

Having Enemies

Sometimes you can be your own enemy. But many people have enemies. Therefore enemies can be in your hood that you don't even know. Having an enemy is a hard thing to keep out of your mind.

An enemy is someone who doesn't wear the same color as you. Wearing the wrong color can lead to a bad start. And a bad start being an enemy could mean a dozen gang members arriving and you being by yourself. Having an enemy makes you a target of your surroundings all the time. And being an enemy is no joke.

-Francisco

From The Beat: Thanks for the break down and analysis of an enemy. It is scary to think you always have to watch your back wherever you go, in case an enemy is nearby. It is scary to think you might have enemies whom you do not even know. Is this the life to live???

More Things To Do

The government should start spending more money on youth, so they can stay out of trouble. They should make better recreation centers in the community and quit spending so much money on grown-ups and business folks who already have money. Start by giving the youth a place where they can go when under pressure cause youth can be persuaded to do bad things. It doesn't matter how many times you get punished, it's how you learn from it.

-Joshua

From The Beat: Excellent idea! We couldn't have said it better ourselves. Investing in our young people today and will reap benefits for the future. Thank you for reaffirming this important idea.

Life

Life is something real
That makes you want to kill.
It is not a game,
But life can end up really lame.
I look at the ground when I am down,
Wondering when I am going to be
Six feet in the ground.
I am in a box,
With four sides and no way out.
I can't believe I am dead
And that my life has come
To its end.

-Mango

From The Beat: Life is nothing but what you make of it and you ARE still alive, because you are writing this to us now. The only way you can avoid being put in the ground too soon, is to change the way you view life.

My Inner Self

To me, there are things that can separate influence and choice. Influence is an excuse that blames other people for what you do in other words.

Choice is being honest and responsible for what you "choose" to do. Inside of my head, there is that office, or entity that helps me to decide.

My right side and my left side Have debates. The angel is on the left and the devil is on the right. This is what everyone calls a conscience. But a conscience can be uprising, or it can be your down fall. You make the choice to fight that voice or not. I will never fight my inner self.

-Divine Artist

From The Beat: Honoring your inner self means more than just listening to or not listening to the voices in your head, it means learning to honor others as well.

Thinking Thoughts

When I am thinking thoughts, I am thinking about
The things I don't got.

So what could I do, but think about
The fights that I've fought.

So when the thoughts that I am thinking
Are sinking into my mind,
I get to thinking about life,
And busting my rhymes.

So realizing the fighting that I've
Done in the past,
Ain't no business to no one and
I ain't taking it back.

There's no regrettin' or forgettin'
What I did for my hood.
I'm expecting what I'm reppin
To be misunderstood.

-Lil' Whodini

From The Beat: These are some good rhymes, but what we hear you saying is that you don't regret hurting others, because they would probably hurt you if you hadn't. It always takes the first respectable person to be the bigger person, the wiser person, who steps away and says that their life is not worth the fight.

My Enemy

Who is my worse enemy? My worse enemies are the people who just know how to talk crap and they don't know what to do. They just like to talk and get you busted because that's what they know how to do and they just hate on you.

-Oscar

From The Beat: Enemies are no fun to have because sometimes they are the reason for your stress. It's hard to avoid them. But if they are only using words against you, and just talking trash, is it possible to ignore them?

I love my Family.

Hey what's up? The only reason I'm here is because I have a warrant and I got into a fight but now I realize that it is not worth it. Now I am locked up, I can't wait to get home with my mommy and my brother and sister.

Well that's about it. I love my sister Bripsa and I love my family. Love always.

-Maria

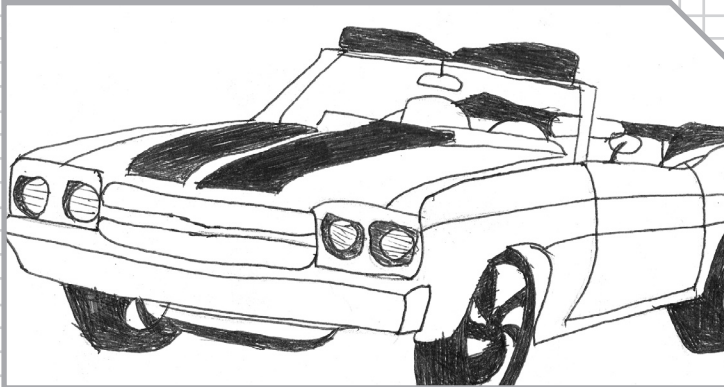
From The Beat: Well we hope you get home soon and you never do anything to get yourself locked up again. Good luck.

Parties And Drinking

Parties with alcohol 'ain't no joke.
Me and my boys drank to get drunk.
Until we were at a party,
And then he got shot. I didn't remember
Because I was too drunk.
I thought that was the end of that,
But man was I wrong.
When he got out of the hospital,
He still continued to drink.
We hit another party,
And he knocked someone out.
I ran to the front, and bullets were flying.
I jumped up and down,
I thought I got hit.
There was a whole in my pants,
But no blood, just meat from my leg.
It hurt but I just kept drinking.
After I was done, I went to the hospital,
But it was okay.
Parties and alcohol 'ain't no joke.

-Myko

From The Beat: We hope that you learned your lesson that night, and aren't still playing rock paper scissor with fate. What you did was dumb and the only people that will have to live with your actions are the ones who will have to bury you if you keep it up.



Imagine Me

Imagine me, living free and back on the streets.
Imagine me, making Gees with rappin' on the beats.
Imagine me, phony free and reppin for my hood.
Imagine me, making sure that my hood is understood.
Imagine me, last one standing all alone.
Imagine me, the only dog going back home.
Imagine me, the leader of my county.
Imagine me, the king of the biggest, baddest valley.

-Lil' Whodini

From The Beat: Sounds like a very selfish shout out to... yourself. Respect is earned not demanded, and we would like to hear more about how the people around you make you a better person, not just how lucky they are to have you around.

Not Going To Leave

Sometimes I am my own enemy' cause when I'm on the monitor, I still leave and I know I'm going to get in trouble. So next time, I'm not going to leave. I'm not going to try and get a violation of probation. I'm not supposed to leave!

-Julian

From The Beat: We hope you stick to your declaration here, that you won't leave again. It's not worth another violation and more time locked up.

Stop The Drugs

One thing that I want to change in my life is to stop smoking weed and stop using drugs. I want that for me and for my family too, so they won't look bad at me, like I'm a bad person.

-Binky

From The Beat: And you can do it! You can break your addiction, but it's going to take a lot of hard work and focus.

Here I am again

Well here I am once again. D.boy and I'm here to let ya'll know how it goes down.

Okay here I am sitting in Juvenile Hall facing CYA or DEITA. Now I see other people come in here for little stuff and get little time. But what bothers me is those people who cry and say they're suicidal when they only got 30 or 90 days. Here I am facing real time and I'm not crying and wishing I was dead.

People are quick to say they are gangster and it's the hood, but when they get caught up in the streets by the law they want to tell on the game.

You see they call me D.Boy and I'm in here for something lightweight. How I feel and how I was taught was if you going to gang bang. Do it to the fullest but when you get caught don't try to sugarcoat it. If afterwards because you wasn't crying when you got caught. Facing time ain't that something big.

-D.Boy

From The Beat: We admire your acceptance of the your incarceration but getting locked up is certainly not something to take lightly. Being locked up will change your life. We hope that the people that are crying have fully embraced their situation and are willing to make the life changes necessary to prevent a further return to prison.

Hurting Myself

Sometimes I feel like I am my own worst enemy. I do things that hurt myself. After I do them, I think about it and I regret it. I feel like I should think more before I act. When I do things I don't really think.

-Francisco

From The Beat: Many times we do things that we know can't be good for ourselves. It's a hard habit to break. Next time, what will you do to make sure you think before you act?

Hurts Like Heck

You know, it is hard living my life point by points and having to choose between two families. When I was a kid I was adopted by my grandma and grandpa.

Now I want to see my mom but I am not allowed to. So I decided to run the streets, because I feel like my grandma doesn't give a dang about me. I just don't care anymore. I could be here for five years, and it 'ain't shhh to me. I would rather be homeless then to live with my grandma.

Bush was a bad president. When I was homeless, he wasn't there doing anything for me. Neither was my grandma. Now I have no one except for my homes.

At the end of the day, the police don't care about you. They go home and could care less what happens to you. They don't care whether I have a place to go home to. So there's no Bush, and there's no grandma and there is no police that can make it stop hurting like heck.

-Bill

From The Beat: People cannot do everything for us, we have to do it ourselves, and all they can do is care. And yes, they all do care, but what is the point in helping somebody who clearly doesn't care about helping themselves?

Enemigos

Pues a mí lo que me ha pasado son puras cosas malas. Con todos mis enemigos nomas me la paso con puro problemas.

Ahora espero que todo sea diferente cuando salga de aqui.

Estoy aqui por andar de borracho y de escandaloso. Por eso ya no voy a andar tomando porque no quiero volver a caer aqui.

Esto no es nada agradable. Esto no deja nada bueno nomas deja puros problemas y enemigos que nomas te quiero hacer la vida imposible, arruinarte todo lo que tienes en la vida.

Ahora quiero cambiar mi vida porque ya no quiero tener los mismos problemas. Ahora quiero algo bueno en mi vida, mirar cosas nuevas, y cambiar.

Pongansen truchas todos los que tienen problemas con sus enemigos.

From The Beat: Claro que estar aqui no es nada agradable, tampoco es agradable tener problemas con otras personas. Parece que estas reflexionando para tu propio bien. No arruines tu vida. Todavia estas a tiempo para hacer un cambio y que ese cambio te evite muchos problemas y alimentaciones. Puedes vivir tu vida difente si quisieraas—una vida llena de alegria y fuera de miedo de que otra persona que lastima.

Enemies

What have happened to me are just a lot of bad things. I keep getting into trouble with all my enemies.

Now I expect everything to be different when I get out. I'm here for being a drunk and for being scandalous. That's why I don't want to drink anymore because I don't want to end up in here.

This is nothing fun. This doesn't bring anything good but the same problems and enemies who want to make your life impossible and ruin everything you got in life.

Now I want to change my life because I don't want to make the same mistakes. Now I want something good in my life, se new things and change

Be careful to all who have problems with enemies.

-Paco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Of course, being here is nothing nice neither to have problems with other people. It seems like you are learning for your own good. Don't ruin your life. You're still have time to make a change and avoid many problems and regrets. You can start living a different life if you want—a life full of joy and off of fear that someone will hurt you.

Mi Padre

Para empezar, me llamo Marco. Despues de este infierno que estoy pasando no me quedan ganas de seguir en las calles.

Quiero salir a cuidar a mi papa ya que de tantos corajes que lo hice pasar. Ahora el presenta una enfermedad que se llama azucar.

From The Beat: Ahora es tiempo de tu apoyo. De la misma vez como lo afectastes, deberias de buscar la manera como ayudarlo. Ayudalo ahora que puedes antes que sea demaciado tarde.

My Father

To start this off, my name is Marco. After this hell - where I am - I don't feel desires of going back to the streets.

I want to get out to take care of my dad given the fact that I made him mad so many times. Now he has a decease called diabetes.

-Paco, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's time for your support. The same way you affected him, you should find a way to help him out. Help him now that you can before it's too late.



Cosas Que Son Importan

Creo que hay muchas cosas que nos importan como hacer dinero, pero para lograr el dinero creo que lo mejor es trabajar. También tienes que pensar en ahorrar para un futuro.

Si tu te lo propones lo puedes lograr y asi tener dinero. No es bueno ser abaricioso al dinero.

Con un trabajo Nuevo, no importa que comiences de abajo, puedes lograr mucho hasta llegar a urgullecer a tu familia. Para mí sentirme bien conmigo mismo es lo más importante. Mi madre es lo mejor también.

Eso de andar en la calle y andar de pandillero no te lleba a nada bueno. Solo te espera lo malo para ti, la cárcel o la muerte.

Es mejor tener mucho amor a tu propia vida y a tu familia. Asi logras mucho en tu vida. Asi es que hagan bien y no el mal para lograr mucho en esta vida.

From The Beat: Estas pensando con la cabeza. Justamente de la manera como estas pensando es la manera adecuada a como llegar a ser alguien en la vida. Las cosas que vienen con gran efuerzos, son las cosas que son bien bendecidas en la vida. ¿Entonces como vas a hacerte sentir orgulloso?

Things That Are Important

I think that there is a lot of things we care about like making money, but in order to gain money it think the better way to do it is by working. You also have to think about saving money for a future.

If you put you mind into it, you will make it and have money. It's not good to be avaricious to money.

With a new job, doesn't matter if you start from the bottom, you will fulfill a lot and make your family proud. For me, to feel proud about myself is what's important. My mother is the best as well.

Being on the streets and being a gangster will not take you anywhere. Everything you will get will get the bad, jail or death.

It's better to have a lot of love to your own life and family. That's how you make a lot of things happening in your life. So, do good and not bad, so you can make a lot of things happen in this life.

-Alberto, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're thinking with your head. The way you are thinking is the proper way you need to be thinking to become someone in life. Things are gained with a lot of efforts, and those things that come with efforts are blessed in life. So how are you going to make yourself proud?

Lo Importante

Lo que es importante para mí es mi familia porque ellos todos estan a mi lado para lo que sea. Estan ahí en las buenas y en las malas. Me siento feliz de tener a mi familia y ser parte de la familia.

Frim The Beat: Si de verdad tu familia es importante, demuéstralo no solo con palabras.

What's Important

What's important to me is my family because they have been always with me through everything. They are there for me through goof and bad. I feel happy to have my family and be part of it.

-Pelon

From The Beat: If your family is very important to you, show it not just with words.

Tu Vida Se Acaba En Las Pandillas

Voy caminando por las calles y veo que mi vida no me vale madre porque nomas me la paso teniendo sexo, fumando y emborrachandome. No puedo vivir en esta pinche vida. Debo seguir con mi pandillas.

Te aconsejo que no entres en pandillas o tu vida se acaba.

From The Beat: Estas viviendo esta vida es porque así tú lo has deseado. Nadie te esta apuntando un arma en la cabeza para que sigas viviendo ese tipo de vida. Estu decisión! Y sabes donde esta te llebara esta decisión.

You're Life Ends In Gangs

I am walking by the streets and I realize that I don't care about my life because all I do is have sex, smoke and getting drunk. I can't live in this damn life. I have to continue to be part of my gang.

I advise you not to get into a gang, or your life will end.

-Rey, Marin

From The Beat: If you are living this life is it because you've asked to live like this. We don't see anyone pointing a gun at you to keep doing what you're doing. It's your choice! And you know where this choice will lead you too.

Se Fue

Mi vida ya no fue la misma desde que perdi a mi novia. Ella se murió en un accidente automovilístico. La extraño mucho. Ya pasaron dos años y siete meses y aún la extraño mucho. Ella se llamaba Silvia. La quería tanto que cuando me enteré, quise matarme. Gracias a Dios no lo hice y espero y algún día encontrarla en el cielo.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho tu pérdida. Esperamos y que esté en un mejor lugar que este. A veces las cosas pasan por alguna razón, y tienes que aceptar la realidad y seguir con la vida que tienes por delante.

She Left

My life hasn't been the same since I lost my girl. She died in a car accident. I miss her a lot. It's been two years and seven months and I sill miss her a lot. Her name is Silvia. I love her so much, and when I found out, I thought about killing me. Thank God I didn't do it and I hope to find her some day in Heaven.

-Joel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. We hope her to be in a better place wherever she is. Sometimes things happen for a reason and you have to accept the reality and continue with the life you have ahead of you.

Cambiar

Que onda? Como esta la raza Catracha? Les voy a contar mi historia.

Llegue a la ciudad de San Francisco, empecé a buscar trabajo, pero fue difícil. Me miraba muy niño y nadie me quería dar trabajo. Despues conoci a unos amigos. Me empecé a llevar con ellos. Me empecé a meter en problemas y pore so llegue a este lugar.

Cuando salga, voy a cambiar para no regresar a este lugar.

El Hondureño, no es Hondureños es catracho. El rey de reyes se llama Jesus Crit. No lo digo yo, lo dice Dios en sus escrituras.

From The Beat: ¿Viste lo que pasa cuando te juntas con malas juntas? ¿Qué es lo que piensas cambiar? Si te llegan a dar otra oportunidad aquí, no la desperdicies en las calles. Hay gente que deben depender de ti.

Change

What's up? How's my Honduran people doing? I'm going to share my story.

I came to San Francisco city, I started to look for work, but it was hard finding one. I looked very young and people didn't want to hire me. Later, I met some friends. I started to get into trouble and that's why I ended up in here.

When I get out of here, I want to change to never come back.

Honduran is not Honduran but a Catracho. The king of King's name is Jesus Christ. I don't say it, but in God's script.

-Chele, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you se what happens when hanging out with the wrong crowd? What are you planning to change? If you get another chance to stay here, don't waste it on the streets. There are people who depends on you.

Lo Que Siento De Corazón

Yo siento en mi corazón que quiero lo mejor para mi hijo, que no éntre a la cárcel como yo he entrado en este lugar.

Cuando salga, quiero recuperar todo el tiempo perdido y estar junto a mi hijo y mi esposa. Quiero aconsejar a mi hijo para que no haga lo que yo hice.

También quiero ver a mi mama feliz y estar con ella y toda mi familia y tener un trabajo para mantener a mi hijo y a mi esposa para que no les pase nada.

From The Beat: Para que eso no llegue a pasar tienes que dar el ejemplo. ¿Estas dispuesto a darle un buen ejemplo a tu hijo? Todo lo que te propongas lo puedes cumplir, siempre y cuando lo quieras hacer. Tienes gente que dependen de ti, no los desepciones.

What I Feel From The Heart

I feel deep inside my heart that I want the best for my son, and I don't want him to come to jail like I came to this place.

When I get out, I want to get back all the wasted time and be with him and my wife. I want to advise my son not to do what I did. I also want to be with my whole family and have job to be able to support my kid and my wife so they won't need anything.

-Vela, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you don't want that to happen, you need to set the example. Are you ready to set it up for him? Everything you propose to do, you can do it if you desire it. You have people who depend on you, don't fail on them.

He Pasado Mucho Tiempo

A la misma vez yo pienso
Que te he perdido por andar de mente loco y lento
Pero ahora vengo con este nuevo talento
A conquistar tu corazón y tu sentimiento

From The Beat: Parece que no llegastes a terminar con tu canción o poema. Terminalo! Suena buena.

It's Been A Long Time

At the mean time
I think that I have lost you for being crazy and slow
But now I come with new talent
To conquest your heart and your feelings.

-Lil' Mayx, Marin

From The Beat: It seems like you didn't get to finish your poem or song. Finish it! It sounds good.

Cambiar

Lo que más me importa es mi libertad. Lo que más me importa es que tengo que cambiar, dejar de hacer lo malo que hacia para no volver a este lugar.

No te imaginas como me siento ahorita que estoy aqui, pero primero Dios tengo la fe que voy a salir y voy a cambiar para que mi madre se sienta orgullosa de mí y de lo que estoy escribiendo.

No les puedo contar más porque no tengo tiempo.
¡Que Dios los bendiga!

From The Beat: Creemos que un cambio es lo mejor que puedes hacer para un mejor futuro. ¿Qué es lo que vas a cambiar?

Change

What I care about most is my freedom. What I care about most is to change, to stop doing the wrong stuff so I won't come back to this place.

You don't have an idea how I feel being here, but hopefully God, I have the faith that I will get out of here and change so my mother feel proud me and what I'm writing.

I can't share more because I'm out of time. God bless you!

-Chelito, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think a change is the best you can think of to have a better future. What are you going to change?

Lo Que Quiero Ser

Yo quiero terminar la preparatoria e ir a la universidades de San Francisco. Quiero tomar un oficio de Medicina. Quiero aprender bien para que ser un professional y pueda ganar mucho dinero para mí. También quiero estudiar para ser abogado o ingeniero.

From The Beat: Nos parece muy bien que estes pensando en un buen futuro. Cualquier oficio de los que tienes pensado te daran un Buena vida. Lucha por uno de ellos o más.

What I Want To Be

I want to finish high school and go to San Francisco's university. I want to study in the medicine field. I want to learn well, so I can become a professional and gain a lot of money for me. I also want to study to become a lawyer or an engineer.

-Omar, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's sounds good to us that you are thinking in achieving a good future. Any of those careers will give you a good life. Fight hard to get it. It takes a lot of work!

Peor Te Va

Soy Hondureño y me siento orgulloso de ser Catracho. Yo vine a este país a trabajar muy duro. Cunado llegue a San Francisco, me di cuenta que vendiendo droga se ganaba más dinero.

Empece a vender droga y ganaba mucho dinero. De nada te sirve porque entre más tienes, peor te va. Solo mira donde estas en la prisión. La fama no me importa.

Mis hermanos son sinceros.

Gracias al Señor que me dió el alm de un gerrero.

From The Beat: Y ahora que has aprendido a lo que ese dinero mal habido da, cuales son tus planes? ¿Cual es la manera de salir adelante? ¿Harías ese tipo de trabajo otra vez?

It's Worse For you

I am Honduran and I feel proud of being Catracho (Honduran). I came to this country to work hard. When I came to San Francisco, I found out that selling drugs gives you money.

I started to sell drugs and I gained a lot of money. But it is not worth is because the more you got, the worse it gets. Just take a look at where you are, in jail. Game isn't all.

My brothers are sincere.

Thank you Lord for giving me the soul of a warrior.

-Luis, San Francisco

From The Beat: What are your intakes about easy now after realizing the consequences it comes with? What's the best way to succeed? Would you do the type of "job" again?

Mi Familia

Yo estoy cambiando por mi familia porque mi familia siempre está conmigo cuando más lo necesitas.

Mi mama es una mujer muy especial y no porque es mi madre sino porque ella es una persona buena y trabajadora. Cuando estas abajo, ella siempre te va a ser sentir feliz.

Mi padre es lo mejor que me ha pasado. Algún día quiero ser como él porque mi padre es el que me enseñó a ser un hombre.

Mi mujer y mi hija son la única razón que tengo fuerzas para cambiar y para seguir fuerte.

Nunca voy a regresar a las cosas que hacía antes. Voy a estar haciendo lo mejor para mi familia. Ellos se lo merecen que yo cambien por ello. Siempre me amaran como sea que yo sea.

From The Beat: Se nota que tienes una gran y bonita familia. Si nosotros fuéramos tú, no estubieramos aquí. Estubieramos al lado de esas personas que nos quieren y a quienes queremos. Ya eres un padre y tienes a tu propia familia formada. En esa familia la única persona que falta eres tú. Ten eso en consideración. Puedes ser ese padre que quieres ser como tu padre. ¡Hazlo!

My Family

I am changing for my family because my family is always there when I need them.

My mother is very special woman and not just because she is my mother but for what she is, a good and hard working woman. When you're down, she will always try to make you feel happy.

My father is the best that has happened to me. I want to be like him some day because he really taught me how to be a man.

My woman and my son is the only reason and the only strength I have to change and to keep fighting hard.

I'll never go back to the things I used to do before. I'll be doing the best for my family. They deserve my change for them. They'll always love me the way I am.

-Jose, Santa Clara

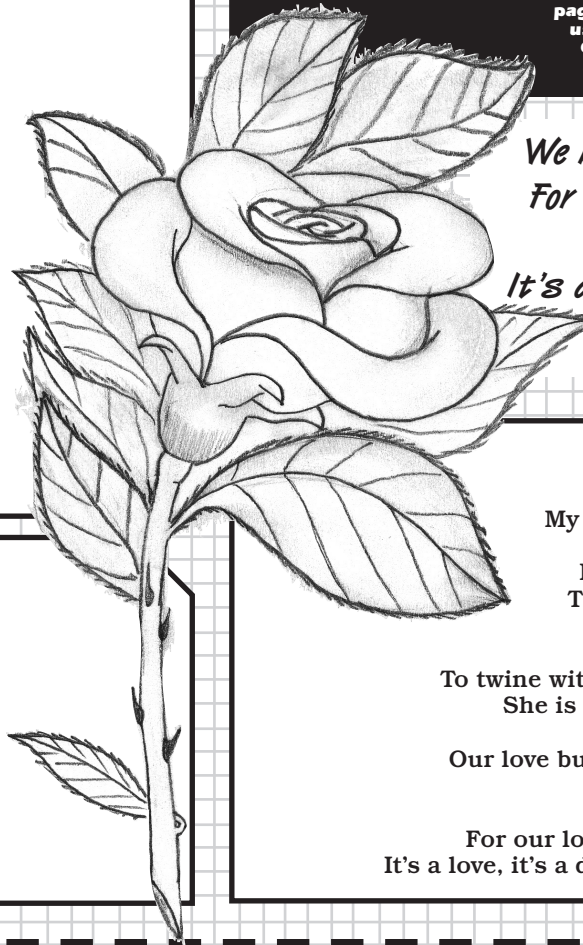
From The Beat: It's obvious that you have a beautiful family out there. If we were you, we wouldn't be here. We would be next to those people who love us and we love. You are now a father, and have your own family. In that family the only piece missing is you. You can be the father you want to be like your father.

My Words Bleed

My imagination ridiculous
My inner thoughts untold
You will never know me
There's no I.D. to my soul
Though I play the role
You swear you know me
'Cause we conversate on the phone
You thank you know me
I'm not the person you thought you knew
You, got it all wrong you don't have a clue
I'm the mystery in your mind
That Sherlock Homes can't solve
I'm that calculus equation
The one that got you scratching your head raw

Alive

The music of the violin
Plays so softly
Ears listen intently
A couple dances to the rhythm
Robins mingle in the distance
The sun becomes a glaze of orange
As it sets in the November sky
The music of the violin
Are such lovely tunes
The music brings me alive.



Our next writer has been a long time contributor for our publication. He hasn't missed a beat in his poetry as Curtis' words are piercing with fire! In his upcoming poems Curtis brings his words alive and has them jumping off the page with descriptive detail. Writing to us from Selma, Alabama, once again Curtis doesn't let us down with yet another set of brilliant pieces!

*We become lost in the mist
For our love tells what the
future holds
It's a love, it's a dream, and
it's a story untold.*

Untold

Zonked on this poetry
My mind is above the mountains
I'm in the mindset of Shelley
Married to my pen since birth
The ceremony was extravagant
The honeymoon
was a sonic burst
To twine with my love, is heaven on earth
She is the tycoon of my imagination
She is the definition of verse
Our love burns greater than a Pyrex dish
We become as liquid lava
We become lost in the mist
For our love tells what the future holds
It's a love, it's a dream, and it's a story untold.

COURTNEY

Dear Beat

Hey my name is Courtney. I'm half white, half Samoan. I'm currently in Humboldt County Juvenile Hall. I've served 70 days so far, but I'm looking at five more months. I think I may be the first to write from here. Well I'll tell you a little about me.

My mom and dad got divorced when I was five. I can't even count how many times my house was broken in by task force (the police). My dad was an alcoholic and a drug dealer. He beat my mom everyday and beat me and my three sisters like there was no tomorrow. I remember coming home from daycare and he had my mom tied up burning her with an iron.

That's when my mom had enough and left him. She took me and my sisters to come to Eureka to live with my grandma. We were living in Hawaii at the time. So we moved to Eureka stayed with my grandma until my mom left and moved with a boyfriend in San Diego. That's when I was 7 and that was when I took my first hit of weed. I was hanging with a group of friends and they pulled out a joint so they went around the circle and when it got to me, I took a hit and that's when it all started.

Soon enough I was drinking wine from my grandpa's wine box. So my mom came back and moved us to San Diego with her boyfriend. Me and my sisters didn't like him, so we

Our next writer is a first time writer writing to us from Humboldt County Juvenile Hall. She genuinely expresses her interest in our publication as she gives her own introduction and lets us know what she's about. We hope this is not the last time we will hear from Courtney and Humboldt Juvenile Hall!

did whatever possible to break them up. Finally they did, and my mom got depressed and moved us back to Eureka. We moved to these apartments. But my mom continued to be depressed so me and my three sisters took care of each other we fed, cloth, bathe each other so when I was 11 we moved to a different apartment.

That's when my cousin moved in. She would party regularly while she gave me weed and alcohol. I would go with my little sister who was 10 to the store across the street and steal for my cousin and older sister. When I was twelve I started partying, selling, smoking, and drinking. Thirteen was when I got locked up for the first time for an assault and battery.

So after that, I started running and doing hard drugs like coke, meth, and ecstasy. So I just kept getting locked up. So here I am in for assault with deadly weapon and deadly attempted. Just kicking back waiting 'till times up.

I would really appreciate it if you write me back so I can show people in here to write The Beat. But hopefully I get out and get off probation.

Failure And Pain

I have been a failure for so many times. And in my life of being a failure, I have felt so much pain. Pain that I brought upon myself. And the reason I am a failure is because I never put enough effort and will power in doing better or being better. I always point the fingers at others, for my reason of being a failure. But it was always me being the one who felt my pains of failure.

And the more I went to paying attention to myself. I went to seeing that the reason I was a failure because the choices I made. And the action I was making. No one put a gun to my head. So all the pain I brought up on myself. But time after time, I use to ask myself: Why am I a failure? Why do I feel sad about being a failure? Why I feel so much pain behind being a failure? Am I going to be anything else other then a failure?

I have strived to become many good things. But I always came back to being a failure; and feeling the pains of being a failure. But I never gave up.

Our next writer has been dropping constant knowledge for the longest. Sending us his work all the way from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, Michael brings to us everything he has learned over the past years. He use to be a hard headed, and as he states in his upcoming piece "Never Bite The Hand That Feed You," but slowly began to open his eyes to the realities of life. And now he has a different approach on life and wants to share all the advice he can with you readers out there. So don't skip the page as Michael enlightens you with some words of wisdom.

I have strived to become many good things. But I always came back to being a failure; and feeling the pains of being a failure. But I never gave up.

Never Bite The Hand That Feed You

When I was young, while doing time in prison, especially doing time in solitary confinement. I use to always hear this old saying. "Never bite the hand that feed you." At that time I some what had an idea as to what that saying meant. Because I never really took the time out to look deeply into what this saying was all about. And I was young and wild. I did not care about anything. Never bite the hand that feed you.

And as time went by fast, the years were making me a little older and wiser. After spending so many years locked down in solitary confinement in a one-man cell, this meant I had to depend on the officer for so much. But I did not see it that way. I fought against the hand that had fed me: my food, mail and everything else.

If the officers don't bring it I don't get it. And now see what they meant. Never bite the hand that feed you. These guards are the ones who had to bring my mail. They had to bring my legal mail. They had to bring my food. They take me to a visit. They bring my personal property. So these were the same hands that had to feed me in every which way. And this is what that saying never bite the hand that feed you meant. Never go against the one's that had to look after you.

A Rock And A Hard Place

Well life is a rock. And prison is the hard place. I have lived a life of a rock. Very hard. And I landed myself in prison, which is the hard place. And in this hard place, they will make you or break you. Or you can make yourself, or break yourself. And no matter how hard one is, they have a hard place in prison for all the hard knocks.

And in this hard place call prison, I have come to learn the hard way. That it is not about being hard. It is about being smart. If I would have been smart, when I first came to prison, things would have not been so hard for me.

Suffering Gives Strength To Go On

People don't like suffering, but I have learned the hard way. That suffering is a way of life. suffering brings the best out of me. Suffering have always gave me strength to go on in my struggles.

The more I suffered the stronger I got. There's no way around suffering. I just learn how to make my moments of suffering, turn out to be something positive. Because there are so much to learn and gain from suffering: insight, strength, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding and so much more. But suffering gives me strength to carry on.

PROFESSOR BLACKMIND

Tracy

Stinking filthy disgusting water
 Molding walls and busted windows
 Canteen once a month
 Food put in a hammock
 Quick showers twice a week
 Locked down except for chow
 In a cell with gangsters and con men
 And wanna be hustlers and smooth talkers
 Believe nothing they say
 Everybody is a baller
 Everybody is getting money
 But ain't got shhh but themselves
 Believe in you and GOD
 This place is full of wise guys
 A pond full of piranhas

Our next writer is writing to us from Deuel Vocational Institute in Tracy, CA. Our long time writer for our publication has made a recent return submitting pieces in week in and week out. This time he writes a poem describing the Prison in Tracy, but not a physical description but details of what you'll find there. Everything from liars, to cons Professor Blackmind tells you what you'll find and what you should stay away from.

They tell lies with thoughts full of deceit
 Trust them as far as you can throw them
 This Tracy
 From R and R
 To C Wing
 I can't stand this place
 And this is where I'm forced to live
 This cell is way too small
 And life is way too short
 This is Tracy.

One Goal

As a leader there should only be one goal. That goal should be to help all of the less fortunate teens like me, get an education so we can become productive members of society. By helping us get an education, your saving our lives' physically, mentally, and emotionally. You will also be helping the future of our country. We the teens are the future, we are the next president, government, police, and army, and if we are not educated and lead right then we will lead this country into the ground. Then all the people that died for our freedom would have died for nothing. If we're not educated, then we won't know how to run this country properly.

I am currently detained in a San Francisco Juvenile detention facility. I've been through a whole lot in my 15 years. I've been shot, I've witness my mom get raped, I've sold drugs, I've seen people get killed and I've lived on the streets, where I had to do anything to survive. I've reached a point in my life where I gave up hope. I didn't have a dream or a vision of my future. My mind was corrupted, from the TV and all the peer pressure that I was receiving.

I became a product of my environment in a bad way, but some how, I managed to pull myself out of the hole I was in. I've caught up on my school credits. I've gained hope and my mind expanded past money, jewelry, cars, and females - (that the TV. planted in my head). I woke up. I realized that there is more to life than money and I also realized that I let the wrong people lead me and raise me.

Now my dream is to go to college to become a criminal DA or defense lawyer, and or a civil rights lawyer, but I don't have enough money to go to college. So I am going to need all the support I can get.

As a positive leader you should lead me and the rest of the mislead teens onto a new life, by contributing to save us a spot in college also known as a spot in society.

"Danger" We Are A Robot To The System

Runnin' from a group home for what? So you can get trapped again? Don't you see this is all mental slavery? I was once a trained robot to the system. Not only the criminal system, but the system called poverty to fail. I was programmed by the TV, and my neighborhood.

I use to think that dope was me only way to eat and bustin' my gun was the only was to solve my problems, but then I finally realized that I'm really only hurtin' my own people.

If you haven't read the book called Roots by Alex Hailey then you should and you'll see what I mean. That book woke me up. I use to be the worst. I've stabbed, watched my mom get raped, witnessed my dad get killed, and a whole lot more. So if I can get a clearer perspective on life from reading that book, then so can you.

Slavery is still happening, but this time its more underground. They enslave you by the media and movies.

They show us, jewelry, more cars, and video hoes. But that is just all fake. No one lives like that. They put it out there, so you and me can fall for it and think that's the only key value to life. But it's not. Some one once told me, if you want to hide something from a black person, then put it in a book. Think on that. Till next time.

Our next writer is writing to us from San Francisco's Juvenile Justice Center. We are not sure how he stumbled into the BWO, but here he is, so lets hear him out, this week, and hope to see him in the POW section in future issues. By the way, D-boy is a good writer who isn't afraid to let you know some of the horrific events he has seen in his life. But all to show you that no matter what, you can still have dreams and goals. Sometimes we get sidetracked by things we see in the media, perhaps music videos, reality shows, etc. But D-boy is trying to remind his people that money ain't everything. There is more to life. And now there is more to D-Boy's writings as he delivers a few inspirational pieces of literature.

Introduction

This is Deangelo a.k.a. D-Boy. I've been detained for 1.5 years at SF YGC in the MAX unit. I'm facing 2.5 years in Arizona I'm currently writing a book called "When Hope Is Lost." I've finished my rough draft and I'm willing to share a couple of my exclusive poems that I will have at the back of my book.

I use to work at The Beat Within for 2 days, but I got arrested on a 664/187 beef.

I'm 16 years old, and very educated, it's just something that I've had all along but I never realized how educated I was/am until I gave up the life. All because of one book called "Roots" by Alex Haley. I hope I can reach out to all of the homies and wake them up to the reality of our situation.

I hope I can promote change and when I get out. In 1 year I would like to come help out at the workshops and promote real change. I've been writing The Beat for 5 years.

"Danger" This Is Reality

Mentally enslaved
Walkin' around blind every day
Addicted to these rap videos
Like a fiend addicted to them rooks
But only we don't see
That this shhh indefinitely
F-ed up our mind
So we can keep these prisons filled
And sum money in toms rocket
All we is to them is a free meal
While we sittin' in a cell
They out there partying like well
Just cause we live in the hood
Don't mean we gotta sell dope or rob or pimp
Instead of killing off our own
We need to stick together
And build a powerful community
By getting an education
Not for the degree
But for yourself
For your mind
Forget the piece of paper
And in time
This will be
A black nation
We're all equal
And there's no traps that you can fall into and die
Where the media will stop
With all these fake ass dreams they be sellin'
And finally we can all go back to
Regular natural humanity.

"Beware A Monster Born"

Promised the good life, but first I gotta sell my soul. Only to find out it was all a show. Now deep, deep down in the pits of my heart it's turning cold. And it burns like steaming hot coals. The steam coming from within gets trapped deeper and deeper each time I received a devastating blow. Now I've built a side to me that, shows people that I'm big and bold. Now a monster is created, who is ruthless and cold. He shows no remorse, and has no fear because he feels like his day is near. He feeds and grows stronger off of abuse and neglect. And as each day slowly progresses the good side gets smaller and smaller until finally the monster takes over my body, mind and soul.

Right is wrong and wrong is right, and any one who tells him otherwise, better be ready to fight. The monster doesn't use the brain, instead he rather re-act insane. His eyes are forever red. His muscles are always tense, and every word, he takes offense.

He's self-conscious and tries to fit in, even if it involves taking life. If he spots someone who is nice, he tries to spread and take over. He will use all his might. He's in the dark, and he has a big great bark. He offers a lifetime supply of gold but his bite is small as his life. But he can't take no bite, unless he grows strong enough in your mind. He will then take over and turn you to a life of crime, filled with hate, depression, weakness, lies, anger, and peer pressure.

By the way he is best friends with hate, depression, weakness, lies, anger and peer pressure are the monster as a baby. And it grows, bigger and meaner under control, but this next prank was the final straw. I'm sitting in the cafeteria and this boy keeps asking me for my apple juice. On his third attempt, I get up and walk to the bathroom. I drink the juice. And then I take a big piss and fill the bottle halfway up.

Then I put some water from the sink in. I walk back out and hand the bottle to the boy and he's so happy that he drinks about 1/3 of it in one gulp. As he takes the bottle from his mouth, he throws up and starts crying. And of course here comes the nurses. They look at me and since I have a history of pulling shhh on people, they know I did something to this boy. One of the nurses picks up the bottle and sniffs it, and she smells piss.

They call my grandpa and tell him to come pick me up. They say I'm not mentally sick and I can't stay in the hospital any longer because I'm disrupting the other patients, he picks me up later that day. He tells me that my grandma is in the hospital getting hip replacement surgery, but I'm too happy that I'm out to think about the seriousness or what he was saying.

He was basically saying that he doesn't have legal rights over me cause we are not relatives by blood, and that its going to be hard for him to take care of me. With him going to work and all that, but he'll try his best to make it work.

So everything is going fine until, my mom comes to visit. She takes me and we walk right out the front door. She got in an argument with my grandpa and she legally had the right to take me. And the only thing I remember real clearly about what happened later that day was, when I called the police and told them that I've been kidnapped, and that was that. All the promises she made about having a dog, a fat house and a bike were all false. So of course my heart was broken... and somehow over time, I learned not to trust nobody, not even moms.

"No Tears Left"

Living a life filled with violence and rape will only lead you to one place. And that is insanity. When you witness someone you love being raped and abused it does something to you. And it starts at confused. But then you get beat for crying, and end up feeling like your dying.

When you're looking for mom's shoulder to cry on, you end up getting smacked like a liar. Damn does she ever get tired of treating me like a flat tire. Can I get one day of peace and food! Without having to worry about being abused.

I got so used to being hit that every time some one came close I would flinch. This became apart of me. It was like a sixth sense.

I cried so much that I couldn't cry for months. I just stayed to myself absorbing it all in. Until one day at school after a visit from my mom. Those emotions exploded like a ticking time bomb.



"I Shouldn't Of"

Sometimes I think that if I didn't care, then I would of gotten in a fare share (at life). Maybe if I pretend I wasn't hungry. I wouldn't have seen my mother get played like a dummy. But my hunger took control. And I ended up meeting a troll, whom eyes were as hot as coals and skin dark as moles.

Maybe if I was never born I would still be a pain free spirit, who doesn't ever get hungry and lives in a place were it never gets dark. Or maybe I would have never had to seen this. And my thoughts wouldn't be playing over and over in my head like a broken record. And my heart wouldn't be torn a part and left looking like its been chewed up by a German Shepard.

But this is just the beginning, as I grow bigger and bigger, my problems grow bigger and bigger. This will seem like it's nothing.

Just wait and see my life in chapter 5. Until it becomes your whole life, don't let him take over and lead you to death. Fight him each day until his death, then finally you can live a life of Joy, whose friends with happiness, success and a fun life. These are the friends who don't try to change you. Instead, they try to help you, by leading you to your goals and dreams.

My Frail Old Angel

one night I had a dream; it left a tale to tell
 I dreamed I saw an angel, poor thing he wasn't doing well
 His body was bruised and battered, his wings were ripped
 and torn.
 I noticed he could barely walk and he looked so tired and worn.
 I walked right up and asked him this, "Angel, how can this be?"
 He turned and paused for a bit,
 Then he spoke these words to me...
 "I am your guardian angel, a great task as you can see
 You've ruined so much throughout your life, look at what
 you done to me
 These bruises are from shielding you, in times of dire ill
 The drugs you used so dangerously, for you I've paid that bill
 My wings you see are ripped and torn, a noble badge I bear
 So many times they've flown for you, from evil unaware
 Each mark has it's own story, of deadly wounds destroyed
 So many times you've made me wish, that I was unemployed
 If only you could make it, simply standing on your own
 Still don't fret or worry my dear, you are never left alone.

A Wolf In Sheep's Clothing

I appear to be friendly and loving, but
 Inside I'm treacherous and rotten
 I'll use who ever to get to the top
 Once they're the used are forgotten
 When the heat is on I always seem to comfort you with help
 Although my ulterior motive is to deceive and finish you
 with death
 I always say, I love to give
 And Yet I always take
 I say that everyone should learn to love
 But I'm always showing hate
 My favorite phrase is "Have a heart"
 While my heart has no love left
 The only reason I'll help another
 Is to benefit myself
 I'm puffed with pride and
 I've took advantage with the power I behold
 It's against my religion but
 Yet I still oppress each and every soul
 I say that I want peace
 But I'm the most dangerous thing on this earth
 The only time I'm really happy is
 When other people hurt
 I'll lure you in with open arms
 And a great big ole' smile
 That's only to underhand you later
 'Cause deception is my style
 I appear to be as harmless
 As the sheep out in the fields
 Although I'm sure that it would break your heart
 If you only knew the real
 Who am I? Who am I?
 You still don't know me yet?
 Be patient people you'll soon find out
 But be sure you don't forget
 The more you get to know me
 The more my hand will be unfolding
 Be curious no-more
 For it is me America
 A wolf in sheep's clothing.

Our next writer is writing to us from South Central Correctional Center in Licking, Mo. Jerry has been a solid writer for our publication, always coming through with some touching pieces. He doesn't often submit pieces but when he does, you can count on them being deep, thoughtful, and full of life. In his latest piece "My Frail Old Angel", Jerry talks about how much he has hurt himself and his own guardian angel, that not only protects him against harm against others, but from the harm that he does to himself also.

The Beat

How is everything? I want to thank you all for the work that you do. Many people wouldn't take time to make sure the voices behind the walls are heard. You all are the best!

I've enclosed these poems in hopes that you all would print them. I made sure to keep it clean because I know that a lot of younger people will read them. Expect to hear from me more often then not. I'll close here, but thanks again.

Ain't No Sunshine

Sunny days don't come around no more
 So in the past is where I leave 'em
 The windows in my cell are covered
 And I'm far away from freedom
 America says let freedom ring
 But I still don't hear the bells
 America had me put in cuffs
 And locked up in a cell
 My Christian family always tell me
 Prayer is the answer
 But they know that the last time I prayed
 My grandpa died from cancer
 When worldly dilemma's force my hand
 Who should I confide in? God or man?
 Who can I trust in this cold, cruel world?
 When nobody understands
 Yeah I'm breathing but I'm not alive
 Not living on my own
 Before I let out my very first cry
 My destiny was carved in stone
 I'm in a cage
 My life is now equivalent to a dog
 How the hell am I a slave
 When slavery's against the law
 Man I wish I would've listened
 To the things my mother said
 Instead of running around
 Sagging my pants and being a knuckle head
 Who said all men are equal
 Whoever did he lied
 I suffer pain from discrimination
 And you can see it in my eyes
 The only thing I can call my own
 Is my heart, my soul, and mind
 Even those are being stripped away
 Slowly, but surely in time
 In this dangerous life on this rocky road
 I must move with precision
 Calculate my every step
 And take precautions when making decisions
 I'll never break
 I'll never submit
 The inflicted pain
 I'll never forget
 For my freedom
 I will stay strong
 Cause ain't no sunshine
 When it's gone.

The Beat

Good evening, with seasons greetings from me and many fans here at Corcoran Prison S.H.U. With that I want to thank you all for continuing to print my poems. Yes I just received the volume 13.43 with my work in it. So thank you all for your time and kind words. Reading your magazine with so many stories it brings one to attention on how life is for others lost in the system; whether it's in the big house or Y.A. the hall, even on the streets. It sharpens the mind to a fine point of which I'm about to make.

Us grown men and women, we know the paths we took that's in the system. They were wrong most had no choice in their life style. For real! But it's those people who can help these youngsters out. It's hard to do this because in order for a heavy hitter to help, he must get his point across.

And if not worded right there's consequences. Yeah I'm one. I'm at this moment in the process of writing and as promised I'll be with those words of wisdom soon. Here's a little phrase I heard years ago. The last four letters in sword spills word. To live and die by the sword it's there for us older homies to use.

Thank you all and God bless. To The Beat I'm enclosing two more of my poems. The one titled "Heavens for Gangsters Too." Please, I'd like to acknowledge a brother because he's entitled to a Christian gangster. A once, gang member, constantly swinging that sword to get his point across. My brother Samuel Mullan. Stay up fool.

Love and respects...

Our next writer is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA. He has been writing to us for quite some time now dropping wonderful pieces. Johnny brings a whole different dimension to his game as an OG and retired gang member, as he swings a mighty sword for another different kind of battle. And that's a battle deep within him-self as he tries to educate all you readers with some knowledge.



Kristy and Nicholas

Laying on my bed
With too many thoughts
Running through my head
It's hard to really think
When you're looking
At some time
With lots of little things
Going through your mind
It starts when you're
In your cell
Alone and cold
Waking up in the night
Wanting someone to hold
So you lay back and wonder
And shed a few tears
Reality just hit you
That you're facing some years
Then you start tripping
On things from the past
It's not knowing if your love
Is really going to last
I've got this little lady
Whom I've loved
From the start
And see she's got this little boy
Who really stole my heart
I know there's some things
That I forgot to do
But they took away my freedom
Before I could see them through
(And that's to love you girl).

Heavens For Gangsters Too

Imagine a place
That's far away
A home of Christ
Where gangsters stay
Even thugs like us
With troubled past
Can live in peace
In a place at last
God created this turf
That I speak of
It comes from our hearts
And far above
Think real hard
And try to vision
About gangsters doing life
But not in prison
They're soldiers of Christ
In all races
Coming together
From different places
All tattooed back
With hearts of stone
This is our place
That we call home
With no more hate
And killing each other
We're united as one
Christian Brothers.

The Old Me Pt. 1

The old me deserves to do life in prison
 The new me, got grace when Christ was risen
 The old me had heart, that was full of corruption
 And often exploded, with violent eruption
 My old heart was hard as nails, and cold as ice
 Condemned to burn in hell, it was running my life
 My thoughts was ugly, and indulged in the flesh
 Made, parts of me ugly and spoiled the rest
 I was, often incapable of feeling my vibe
 Consumed by evil, it was killing me inside
 I burned with jealousy
 I was married to envy
 That would often fuel the fire that would burn within me
 In the world of the dead, is where I called my house
 Where the blind led the blind, and the dead bury their own
 Yeah, the old me deserve to burn, eternally on stones
 But the new me got grace, when Christ went home.

The New Me Pt 2

The new me have life, and it's full of love
 Like Christ, it was given from the heavens above
 From my, heavenly father who brings the dead to life
 And circumcises the heart, and fill the soul with light
 The new me lives under God's new law of grace
 Partake in Christ death, and all my sins erased
 I now live my faith, and avoid and hindrance
 And serve the only God, who declare the guilty innocent
 The God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob
 Who judged the whole world, and fill the burning lake up
 I've been set free, from the law of sin and death
 Protect my thoughts from Satan, keep God's armor on my Chest
 In the army of the lord side by side with his troops
 With the helmet of salvation, and the garments of truth.

The Storm

Curses are blessing's in disguise
 Storms wash away the veil from our eyes
 Many try to hide, they confide in the wrong sources
 When good and evil collide, don't take sides with the wrong forces
 This is your storm, for good and evil don't mix
 Unpleasant weather conditions, spirits battle for the sick
 It's a war for your soul, so what side do you pick?
 A storm that you can control, you can be the victim of it
 Invisible to the eyes, but the pain it inflicts
 Can be felt from all angles if we mentally shift
 Back and forth like a ship being rocked by waves
 Unstable in our thoughts double minded in our ways.

The Storm Pt 2

Storm can be our enemy, or mans best friend
 That wash away the old, so the new can begin
 But that depends, on how full you choose to see your cup
 And you're ready for change, and give the old you up
 With storms come pain, the stripping away of the old
 Like fire burning impurities, away from the gold
 The storm is spiritual fork in the road
 Where we choose the destination of our soul
 One must become aware of their own existence
 One outside of themselves with no restriction
 The minds, that's been confined, to the ways of the World
 Must no longer give the swine their pearl's.

Our next writer is a first time writer for our magazine. Juan as an aspiring rapper and poet. All his poems are religious, but not heavy hitting religious. He gets his point across and rhymes every line. A lot of laws are drawn from the bible. You don't have to be super religious in order for y'all to follow the law. All you have to is stop breaking the law, and you will find yourself more stress free and in a more positive environment. Sending us some good positive poems from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Keep them coming Juan!

Dear The Beat

Greeting's, my name is Juan Tidwell Sr. I am an aspiring Christian rapper and poet. I am enclosing three samples of my style of writing (It's a struggle, The old and new me, and The Storm) from my book entitled The Diary Of John. The Diary of John is a unpublished manuscript. However in April of this year I did apply for a copyright with the library of congress. I will sign over consent for the use of my material if you are willing to work with me.

I would like to receive a subscription to The Beat Within, however, I don't have the means to pay for one at this time. Lastly, I was interested in knowing if your free writing workshop can be sent to me. I would really like to take your course if possible. I prayerfully look forward to hearing from you soon, and eagerly anticipate contributing to your positive magazine. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

It's A Struggle Pt 1

It's a struggling juggling this everyday life
 Trying to find the courage to fight this everyday Fight
 For my adversary, the beast thrive in deceit
 Always on the prowl, taking the lives of the weak
 Yeah, I'm a Christian, but he can catch me while I'm hurting
 And promise me some answers, in the hard time's while I'm searching
 Spreading through my body like some cancer while he's working
 Surrender to his will, and I'm backsliding again
 But I'll dust myself off and try again
 I won't surrender cause my lord has him beaten
 Trembling in fear, taking his words while he's speaking
 Yeah, something's going to happen like extra burdens
 on my shoulders
 Weighing me down like two ten-ton boulders
 But it's essential I keep my faith
 And thank my lord and savior everyday when I awake
 I'm going to stand fast, and fight the good fight
 'Cause no matter what happens, I'll be a Christian fo' life.

It's A Struggle Pt 2

We can't escape this harsh reality, our flesh is a prison
 Our spirits shackled to our bodies everyday that were living
 Enslaved by our passion and desires when driven
 Seduced by satisfaction until tomorrow has risen
 And where is Christ at this time?
 He's on the back burner simmering
 When hard times hit, that's when we start remembering
 What Jesus said when this pain starts hemorrhaging
 G: Where shall I go when this pain starts emergin'.
 A: Come to me, son, for I am your surgeon.
 Come to me, run son, escape from the serpent.
 G: Where shall I go? What path shall I choose?
 A: Don't search for your path, have your path search for you.
 Don't search for my path! I'm afraid I'm confused.
 A: Surrender to my will, and I will show you what to do.
 I surrender to his will, 'cause Jesus Christ is real
 He has helped me with the hard struggles I fight
 So, no matter what happens, I'll be a Christian fo' life.

Nobody Wants to Hear That Shhh

What's up, Beat? It's your boy Cain dropping some new lines for the end of '08. This piece is for the youngsters and anyone else who takes what I put down to heart. I'm 27 and I'll be 28 in like 5 months. I spent the last 4 years in here. Almost all my 20's are gone. These are supposed to be the prime years of your life. I faced 25 years with an L twice. I don't even have an assault on record, all burglaries. In California, 3 strikes can be for petty theft, a nickel of a narcotic drug.

I swim with killers and sharks. I get cut next year, but I've spent almost 12 years since Juvie locked up. I understand where you guys come from because I've been there and experienced a lot for my age. So whatever you're going through, keep your heads up. Stay true to the game. You don't gotta lay it down for anybody, rivals, COs. You don't gotta be the hardest out there. Fights and drama are never gonna stop. So handle what you gotta handle. I don't let anyone down play me. And people who complain or hard time feeling sorry for themselves, I don't chill with. Nobody wants to hear some CO talking crap or some 55 year old pinto telling you how it's gonna be.

You're growing men. Think smart. I said it before. Do what you wanna do. Just remember every action has a reaction. I'm not gonna tell you do this or that because that's all you hear all day. For those that feel like they're trapped in a struggle, there's always a way to break that bond. Some ways are different than others. I'm sure you usually hear "give up your lifestyle before it's too late." What I say is if you really seek change just give up what makes you fail.

Our next writer is just dropping some knowledge for you readers out there. Our boy Cain has been a smart man and is aiming at shooting some advice to all you younger readers out there. He's been through the game and has gave 12 years of his life to the system. Now he writes to drop knowledge and tell everyone to follow your heart. Be you. Forget about everything else and the drama that you're surround by. Sending us his advice from Salinas Valley State Prison, in Ca drops some food for thought!

I still got homies in gangs, but a lot just kick it, famous tattoo artists, artists, car clubs, and if a fight or situation is coming, handle what you gotta handle. If you really believe in yourself and what you represent you'll succeed.

It may not be easy but it is what it is. I plan to follow my dreams, rapping, doing this graffiti thing, getting my paper. I still smoke weed, but regardless of what someone else says, that's a choice you gotta make yourself. It's illegal for the most part and if you're slipping you know the consequence. If it's too harsh and not worth it; stop. Very few people ever make millions slangin' D, or become feared or respected a Scarface. Doing time in 3 states I've met O.G.'s, shot callers, and some off the wall artists.

My advice is find out who you are, what you wanna be, and follow your heart. I've been blessed and have a second chance, more like a tenth chance. I've been able to stay true, slang 'em when you gotta, don't get into wrecks, got no green light or have someone wanna kill me because I snitched 'em off. Feel me.

So forget what a hater gotta say. Don't rely on anyone to take a beef for you. If someone you thought was someone you knew and they turned out not to be, and you trusted 'em, don't give up believing in yourself.

LIL' RED RIDING HOOD

Now our next writer is a special guest simply because we don't get too many women writing for The Beat With-Out these days. We welcome Lil' Red Riding Hood, from The Women's Correctional Facility in Chowchilla, CA. She comes through with an eerie poem for y'all to read. It's a little trippy, but it will get you to think. The poem has dark feeling to it. It's about death, but it can also be about life as the two and two go in hand.

My First Day In Hell!

The trip originates at the gate of death. Your initial point of departure may prove more than a little frightening as you suddenly realize the finality of your destination. The trip itself will leave you with the little time to contemplate what awaits.

As you pass through the doorway of death, you will notice almost immediately that your direction is taking you away from the light towards what appears to be complete utter darkness.

With each passing moment the darkness becomes more and more intense. At first the absence of light is threatening. Then the intensity of the darkness is only matched by the absence of any joyful sounds - no music, no laughter, no sounds of happiness.

As you move further into the night, faint sounds of moaning and sounds of crying become detectable. They seem to be coming through the darkness from every direction.

You become aware of faint light. It flickers like a flame, yet thick clouds of smoke dance all around it, keeping the flame from casting off any real hope of light. Suddenly you find yourself obsessed to know what day and what time is it? It already feels like I've been here for eternity. And it's only been one day.

SOLDIER 2012

Our next writer is sending us some very deep emotions from Administrative Segregation aka the hole, inside of a Correctional Facility in Lancaster, CA. Now we're publishing this piece because he actually took the time to write a letter and introduce himself and what he's about. We're not trying to put him on blast, but we found this piece very touching as it takes a lot for a man to express some true emotions. It's not easy to make that change from doing negative to positive. But it's possible. There has been many who have, some of us have, so please don't skip this piece folks because when there's a will, there's a way.

Letting You know

I have a lot of years to do. Because of the choices I have made... throughout my life I never really thought about all the people I've hurt because of my actions (family, friends, etc.). Now as I sit in this 8ft by 10ft cell, which is now my home for the next several years. I want the change to start now.

All my I hope is not lost. I still have a chance to get it right. I'm not lost yet. I'm a fighter always have been always will be. I refuse to give this place (system) my last dying breathe or my time. I want to hold my mom again. I want to see my grandma smile at me.

I'm telling you this because someone here gave me your volume 13.40 for me to read and on the back of the last page really touched me deeply. This is what I really need right now positive influence in my life. Right now I'm just starting my term, and I have no family support, I let them all down. So if there's a chance I could receive your paper please know it could be the reason I make it or lose it. Thank you for listening to me, con mucho respecto (with a lot of respect).

My Intro

Hello there! Well, here I am. About time also. I have planned on writing The Beat Within for quite some time now, but I've procrastinated for one reason or another. I could list dozens of reason. Some would be valid, but most simply excuses. So I'll leave that alone.

This is my first time writing The Beat Within and hope to write more in the future. After all, I have nothing but time.(Ha! Ha!) Yes, I laugh and joke about it. Why? Because they may have taken my freedom, but I refuse to let them take my sense of humor.

On December 21, 2008 I will have been incarcerated for five years flat. Fifty-five months of that I spent fighting my case in the county jail. A charge I was assured to be found guilty of, because of a court appointed attorney who did absolutely nothing necessary to prove my innocence.

My attorney's ineptness was astounding. His ineffectiveness blatant. Yet, the judge refused to dismiss him at three Marsden hearings. He filed no motions, called no witnesses at my trial, and did all he could to get me convicted. Why because he was mad at me. When I saw he was doing nothing necessary to ensure I received a fair trial, I began writing other attorneys seeking help.

When he learned of this he became angry, even hostile toward me. He in fact "told" me "he was going to do nothing". Nothing but his best to get me convicted. When I told the judge this he basically called me a liar. His exact words were, "I've known Mr. W for 26 years, and don't believe he would say something like that." That saying alone showed bias and prejudice on the judge's part.

At the trial the District Attorney took five-and-a-half days to present their case. When it was time for my attorney to present a defense, all he did was call the DA's investigator to the stand, ask him five questions, and say "The defense rests." That's it! That's all! So basically I had no trial.

I was stuck with an inept attorney. The judge would not allow me to dismiss, an attorney who would not use the "peremptory challenge" to dismiss my biased judge. Yep, I was caught between a rock and a hard place, in a system no longer about guilt or innocence...only conviction.

I cannot blame the jury for their decision. Had I have been on my jury I would have found me guilty. Now it is up to the Appellate Court to decide if I received a fair trial, or if ineffective assistance of counsel caused my trial to be a farce and a sham. So here I sit in the State Prison in Tracy, California. Five months and ten days into an 80 to Life sentence. This Christmas (2008) will be my sixth in a

Our next writer is a first time writer out of Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. and pretty damn good one! We have a special treat for y'all as he delivers his own introduction and tells us how his trial got mishandled. He wrote a poem and a prose. For those of you who don't know what a prose is it's a writing or speech in its normal continuous form, without the rhythmic or visual line of structure of poetry. It's a beautiful piece of writing as "Yesterday's Return Engagement" is filled with all the wonderful feelings and negative feelings that past memories can bring. And then you start thinking a bout a future that isn't there, when you have nothing but time to look forward to. He then brings little humor to the page with a Christmas Cheer poem, which is better late than never. Welcome JRP!

row behind bars, and will be my sixth in a row behind bars, and easily a couple more waiting on the appellate court to make a decision.

Reception in prison is bad enough, but we get to spend Christmas this year locked down. Not Cool! Thanks to some idiots and their "gangbanger" mentality. They dropped out of one gang only to jump into another. Now that truly shows a lack of intelligence mixed with a generous amount of immaturity and insecurity.

The lethargic atmosphere, of a receptions center's monotony, drips melancholy and its vapid environment. Leaving one to wallow in memories or contemplation of the future. Neither of which proves conducive to a positive frame of mind.

I am including with this letter one poem (Christmas Cheer), and one piece of prose (Yesterday's Return Engagement) I wrote. I believe all those relegated to the realm of incarceration will be able to relate personally to both.

The poem, Christmas Cheer is meant to be "informative" rather than "negative." More about "feelings" than a "frame of mind." Will I celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus? Yes, to both. I have even made me a Christmas hat with Holly berries and leaves, candy canes and snowflakes I drew and colored on it. It's Christmas in prison a happy experience? Most definitely, no! However, that does not mean I can't enjoy and celebrate it to the best of my ability.

The piece of prose, "Yesterday's Return Engagement," is self explanatory. Memories play a big part in the world of doing time. Although this piece of prose came from my inner being, I believe that most (if not all) who read it will be able to wrap their minds around its contents.

I will bring this (my first) submission to a close. I wish all a sense of peace. Remember, happiness is all about perception, and joy is only a thought away.

May God bless you and your loved ones throughout the upcoming New Year.

Christmas Cheer

A big bah humbug
 This I have to say
 It's with the Grinch
 That I want to play
 Shoot Santa Clause
 Fry the reindeer
 My Christmas spirit
 Isn't Christmas cheer?
 There's not a thing merry
 About where I am here
 I'm surrounded by concrete
 Are my feelings very clear?
 These doors made of steel

Hide the world from sight
 I hope Christmas Eve
 Fills you full of fright
 May your stockings be filled
 With big lumps of coal
 I hope your Christmas stinks
 And all your presents are stole
 On this Christmas Day
 I will really be pissed
 'Cause I'll be amorous as hell
 And won't even be kissed
 I won't have any presents
 Under a Christmas tree
 So to all you merry souls
 Be glad that you are free.

Yesterday's Return Engagement

Memories...paint my life as a terrifying portrait; A horrifying picture. A book whose landscape is a barren environment, dotted by trees of pain wilting in the shadows of despair, and fed by the water of sorrow.

Memories...a disembodied whisper in remembrance of bad times- the good moments rare and far between in the chapters' of my life. The rare good word within incomplete sentences, crowded out by paragraphs of pain and sorrow vying for supremacy in the pages of my existence.

Memories...a legacy of loss and grief in their ineffable weariness. A place marked by the absence of tomorrow, wherein today lingers in melancholy, and my future has caught fire and is burning.

Memories...prowling in the marrow of the past, searing the bleakest chambers of my heart. Thoughts like agitated moths swooping and fluttering through my mind seeking light in my darkness.

Memories... a mad spiral and plummet onto a rock of hard reminiscence. Thoughts flayed layer by layer, ranged in

the bowels of my being, ticking away like dark demons hanging heavily in my mind's data bank.

Memories... leaving feelings eviscerated like a black hole in my chest. Emotions boiling within my heart, as thoughts roil across the plains of my mind, existing precariously on the edge.

Memories...lie a mischievous childhood playmate, taunt me from hiding place after hiding place, in a deep well of past dappled by shades of anguish.

Memories...somewhere earlier; standing before the mirror of madness within. Passing through my own reflection of lunacy silvered by misery; I'm lost somewhere deep inside myself.

Memories...emotional urges pitted against an unyielding past. The force of emptiness, enhancing the barrier of horrible recollection, balanced against the threat of potential disaster.

Memories...blindfolded to the future, linked to the past. A probability of choices...infinite...while time passes finitely and acutely. A fate not entirely of my choosing...

Chained by others' deeds.

Memories...paint my life as a terrifying portrait; A horrifying picture.

A Flicker Of Faith

Devious thoughts continuously flicker through my mind

It's been a rough journey but I will conquer the hands of time

The sandman is nearing I can hear his blissful songs
Like the sounds of gurgling water when taking hits from the bong

Caressing the huka with malicious intent
Repacking the bowl with each one that is spent
Like cartridges that fire then fall to the ground
You must reload the clips or risk being chopped down
For life is a struggle in the times of today
Even though I'm locked up, with my life's time I continue to pay

Dancing images of snarling faces bounce around in my head

Fearing if I turn my back on them I might end up dead
So I continuously face them night after night

Loosing my sanity unsure of what's wrong or right

Am I coming or going of this I'm unsure

But still I continue in search of a cure

I hear the screams of my veins

From their hunger pains the screams are so loud

I'm driven further insane

With no place to run no safe shelter in sight

I pick up my pillow and cover my head so tight

In hopes of smothering my veins and all their shrieking sounds

To try and cease the yelping of the devils blood hounds

Then as quick as they came the silence did too

It's a trip what having a little faith in the lord can do

So switch up your thinking before its too late

And before you know it lil' homey you'll walk through them gates

And once again be free then what will you do

To keep it real lil' homey it's all up to you.

BIG PAYA

Our next writer is a first time writer writing to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. We welcome Big Paya, who actually came across our publication by mistake, or by fate. Either of the two, we are pleased to have him grace the pages of our publication with "A Flicker of Faith." We hope to hear more from our new friend!

My curiosity got the best of me so I began to read some of the poems. Then a few more, 'till I had read all the poems.

Dear Beat Within

Ok real quick. I came across your magazine by accident when someone slid a copy of your magazine up under my puerta (door) by mistake. It was actually meant for the cell next to mine. Unaware at first of its contents I opened up expecting a kite to be hidden within its pages but I came up short.

My curiosity got the best of me so I began to read some of the poems. Then a few more, 'till I had read all the poems. I then jotted down your address to try and see if you guys would start sending me some of my own magazines.

I also have included a poem of my own just to see if it could make it on to your pages' vacant lines. Well only time will tell que no?

Other than this, I just want to say gracious for doing what you do and with that said I'm gone as I came con puro respeto(with all respect).

Memories...blindfolded to the future,
linked to the past. A probability of
choices...infinite...while time passes
finitely and acutely. A fate not entirely
of my choosing...

[read the rest of Jeffrey R. Price's BWO piece on page 70](#)

